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CLARA.

Stubs of Time



By **Edward Cumberland**

Illustrations by
the Author

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Press of Nixon-Jones, St. Louis, 1904.

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APOLOGY.

At the request of friends (whose literary discrimination and taste I do not guarantee) I submit this heterogeneous collection of writings to the press. Perhaps it is with our books as it is with ourselves — we cannot see them as others do; yet, in justice to myself, I will say that I am fully aware that there are many shortcomings herein contained. I confess to extravagancies of rhetoric and fancy, possible errors of grammar, crudities of style and construction — all of which I have had neither the time nor inclination to correct or ameliorate. The productions have been the outcome of odd moments of leisure — stubs of time — and I let them go as they are, without pruning or patching.

Should any deem them worthy of adverse criticism, let the blame be laid on my friends, who, perchance, with evil intent and a subtle application of that seductive unction of flattery, to which we are all more or less susceptible, especially in connection with our fond foibles and hobbies, have led me to believe that there is some merit among the dross.

I might say, with Poe, that literature has been to me, not a purpose, but a passion and a pastime. Circumstances have always demanded that whatever plug of a Pegasus nature bestowed upon me should be usually hitched to a

more practical vehicle than the ethereal car of dreams and visions in which literati must embark for Parnassian passage. When my jaded equine has been turned loose to cavort in the pleasant fields and daisied meadows, it has been only after a day at the plow, with the sweat-marks on his back, and the thunder of his neck all chafed with the wearying collar (to stretch metaphorical latitude). Hence, his gambols should be regarded charitably; if they appear stiff, stilted, queer or ungraceful, give him a grain of allowance.

Of the illustrations, the less said the better. Let them howl for themselves. There is one, however, which I feel will make amends for the rest. It is not an original, nor am I fortunate owner of its priceless prototype; but it is a replica of a wondrous and perfect piece of artistic creation. The possessor of the original was most influential among those who persuaded me into publication. My final yielding was conditioned upon permission to use the picture as a frontispiece. Such a bargain I regard as a masterstroke of policy on my part; for I feel confident that with so beautiful, and heretofore unpublished, work of art in my book, its sale cannot but be immense in spite of its other contents. With such a picture adorning its front page a census report could not fail to speedily become the popular book of the year.

EDWARD CUMBERLAND.

DEDICATION

TO CLARA: A RHAPSODY.

"She lives, and hath a family; but 'tis not mine: so say I she's dead." — *Etherege*.

"Here, boy, bring me a pen—I have seen something in a woman's eye, and I am mad to write."

"A goose-quill, Sir?"

"No, thou fool, but the plume of a lark or nightingale, or an eagle's primary. I feel it in me to soar, and sing sweetly."

"And your ink, Sir?"

"Let it be the blood of a dove."

"Your script, Sir?"

"The pelt of a white doe that died of love."

"And you would write that you saw in her eyes?"

"Ay, thou ninny."

"A woman's eye is never under oath: be careful, Sir."

— *Charles Sedley*.

Sweetheart, alas! I sadly realize
That 'twere, indeed, a vain and fruitless stress —
The feeling born of looking in your eyes
To daring essay to express.

I know — woe's me! 'tis but a sacrifice,
The effort best that we can put forth here —
A patient climbing to the Paradise
Which we shall miss that others be more near.

We strive, we work, we hope, we die ;
 We never reach the heights we feel :
 While e'er before us still more high
 Mounts the path of our ideal.

We trudge our path, and turn aside,
 And rest resigned in the shade, —
 All's well if life has only cried,
 " On," to the Race — " no retrograde ! "



E'en with your picture here before me now,
 As lowly paddock singing to the sun,
 The humble efforts of unlaurell'd brow
 I offer you the each and every one.

* * * * *

I look on thy face, and dream ;
 I look on thy lips, and sigh ;
 And Heaven and Hell doth seem
 Within thy face to lie.

Yes, Hell it is, yet sweet —
Great God, I'd have it so!
And bitter Heaven, meet
For a soul in dulcet woe,

Thy lips, thy brow, thy hair,
Thy cheek, thy neck, thine eye:
Were Basilisk half so fair
I could but look and die.

* * * * *

I will not now complain
That I have drunk the wine;
I'll take the lees of pain
With the pleasure that was mine.

I will not now complain
Because the wine is gone:—
O, Lord, 'twas sweet to drain
That cup no god would scorn!

I do not rue I quaff'd:
The wine was worth the bane;
Though Sin did brew the draught
Fain would I drink again.

* * * * *



Not mine the call to preach and moralize —
Some ships must sink that others know the shoal —
Content to drink, and then to agonize,
I fall and fail, still pointing to the goal.

New creeds, new faith, and still a deeper yearn ;
More hungry grows the mighty Human Heart
For deeds that love and living words that burn,
For men who bear to other Meccas than the mart.

They laugh at love whose heart is cold,
They laugh at love, and mocking sneer, —
Forget their youth, and hug their gold,
And Mammon mounts on Cupid's bier.

* * * * *



DISPENSERS THREE OF HUMAN FATE.

O Love, O Death, O Time —
Dispensers three of human fate,
Unto your awesome shrine
I come and supplicate.

Tell me the riddle of the Sphinx,
The cause and why of weal and woe.
Speak out! — a coward, he who shrinks
From cursed truth, or fears to know.

A suppliant at thy solemn fane,
A love eterne my subtle myrrh,
A frankincense of holy pain,
And pastil bless'd — a thought of Her.

Hear me, I pray, and give me ruth,
Ye halcyon three, ye dread triune:
An humble seeker after truth,
O solve for me life's tragic rune.

Why hearts beat only for to break;
Why birth is budding of the bier;
Why close upon gay laughter's wake
Comes the inevitable tear.

Why passion comes with sacred fires;
Why wisdom seeks in vain to find
Whence comes the yearning which aspires,
And bids us look beyond mankind.

O, speak, ye three — is man all clay,
 A puppet and a mere machine?
 Is science vain? Will truth gainsay
 The teaching of the Nazarene?

Is love a farce? Must we decry
 The pilot who directs his way
 By cynosure of woman's eye,
 By faith in what the feelings say?

* * * * *



There's more wisdom in the kiss of love
 Than e'er oped to sage or sibyl key:
 In thrush's trill and coo of dove
 Lies meaning deeper than the sea.

* * * * *

A man, a maid, a garden eld —
 Rose-scented zephyrs sighing low:
 Well knew I why her bosom swell'd —
 Why shone her eyes and thrilled me so.

A rose, a song, a maiden's eye,
A lover's kiss, a glass of wine,
A summer's eve, a starry sky;
A single soul was hers and mine.

A song, a rose in golden hair,
The twilight and the harvest moon,
A scent of flowers on the air,
The heaven of love's highest noon.

A man, a maid, a lullaby
Of drowsy swallows nesting near,
A whispered word, a gentle sigh,
A timid look of love's sweet fear.

A clasp of hands, a touch of lips:
Two souls rushed into Paradise.
What reckoned they of Furies' whips,—
Of iron Fate's exacting price?

Love hurled two lives through Heaven's bliss—
Twain spirits welded into one;
While mystery of the magic kiss
Did rapturous through their beings run.

* * * * *

A man, a maid, a vesper song, —
The cup of Time holds Lethe's ale: —
Drink deep, who may, forget the wrong,
Kill memory of the bliss and bale.



A solemn dirge, a dolorous knell,
 A cross of roses fair and white,
 Some lilies pale, some immortelle ;
 Cold lips are kissed — Love's last good-night.

A somber eve, a silent tomb,
 A wind which moans in monotone,
 Dark shadows and a sense of gloom,
 A heartache and a man alone.

While the cedars sigh and moan,
 While the night-birds plaintive cry,
 In the dark I go alone
 To where my Love does lie.

Then the low moon through the trees
 Gleams and blinks as tearful eye ;
 And falling on my knees,
 I ask the Whence? and Why?

* * * * *



CLOTHO SPINS, AND EROS PLUCKS THE STRAN.



Gray Sisters sad, despondent three,
 Invoke oblivion on the backward view :
 The Past is dead, so let it be :
 The Present calls, and bids us do.

Time opes again the fatal cask —
 Pandora's box — and lets the single inmate go :
 Hope fled, we turn unto our task
 To deaden thought, forget, and lessen woe.

Dark Clotho spins, and Eros plucks the stran
 To tangle and to knot it all awry :
 Yet we believe — as aye has every man —
 That all is done beneath a master's eye.

Of love and work is saved the race ;
 They give us faith, and teach us bear,
 And help us bravely smile and face
 The undercurrents of despair.

* * * * *

The years pass on, and we grow blind ;
 The narrow world is more ; the beaten ways
 We tread, and seldom see behind
 The vanished visions of the early days.

So they of years will bow the knee
 At memory's shrine, and offer up
 The dregs of life to Verdandi —
 Faint tang of youth still in the cup.

While they of days, with heart of hope,
 Stretch arms out to seductive Skuld: —
 Full sanguine youth! — while sages grope
 They conquer Fate by playing fool.

And they of years not old but ripe
 To Ulder give their time and praise,
 And bearing brave her frequent stripe,
 Repeat by rote her prosy lays.

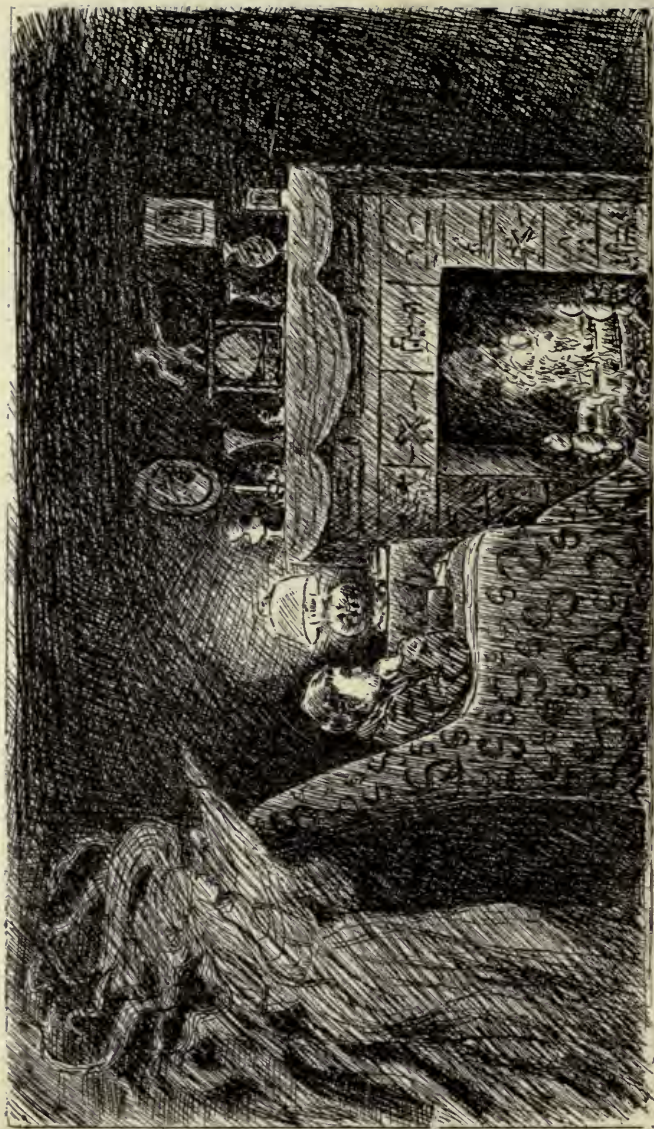
* * * * *

The clock ticks loud, the lamp burns dim,
 The embers glow 'mid the dark smoke's curl,
 The wild wind wails a weird hymn
 While midnight broods o'er a sleeping world.

The curtains shake, the casements dance,
 And a lone man lists to the solemn note —
 The deep dull ghostly dissonance
 Of night-winds in the chimney's throat.

* * * * *

I go to the grave of my dear dead Love;
 I open the urn where the ashes lie —
 Ashes of memory cold and gray —
 Ashes of roses sadly sweet:



THERE SEEMED TO COME A PHANTOM FAIR.

And lo! there, too, in the urn I ope
Lies the corse of a bright and youthful Hope —
Young Hope that e'er had conquered rue,
When I buried my Love I buried it too:
I buried them both, but She never knew.

Then as I dream and ponder there,
Torn in a fierce psychomachy,
'There seemed to come a phantom fair,
Wondrous, shimmering, vaguely bright,
With golden mist of radiant hair;
With angel face of love and light:
And spake it thus, I thought, to me: —

L'ENVOI.

“ Do not despair because thou canst not see the way —
All Heaven and Earth lies in a mightier hand:
Do thy appointed task: be brave; be true;
The good will last, the wrong is but to-day:
The time will come when all shall understand,
And know the measure of the work they do.

Do not despair because the load is much too great
For thy poor shoulders, and thy heart is sore;
While wails the voice of travailed souls in vain,
And life seems but a dark and grim estate.
Be kind, and love, and God will keep the score,
And balance up all work and woe and pain.

Do not despair because unknown the will of Fate —
No man is great through what he knows; for all
The wisdom of the sages and the world's accreted lore
Is but a jot. Through what he is and does a man is
great.

Take thou life's lessons, and drink its lees of gall,
Learning that brain though mighty, yet the heart is
more.

Do not despair because thou loved but to be left for-
lorn:

God's laws are wise; let sorrow be a touch
Of His kind hand, shaping the stubborn mould
To higher value and a fairer form.

And Midas-fingered pain — let it be such
As striking thee shalt turn thy earth to gold."





FRIAR SNOKE.

THE SEAL OF DE BURLEYVILLE.

A TALE OF OLD ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

“ My masters all, this is St. Thomas’-day,
And Christmas now can’t be far off, you’ll say.
And when you to the Ward-motes do repair,
I hope such good men will be chosen there,
As constables for the ensuing year,
As will not grudge the watchmen good strong beer.”

The Baron de Burleyville frowned, and fingered the pommel of his sword pettishly :

“ I took thee for a broad man, Friar,” he said.

“ Ay, my Lord,” quoth Friar Snicke, “ and so I be — too broad, I fear, both in body and mind for the straight and narrow cut of my cloth.”

“ The more reason,” continued the Baron, “ that the twenty pounds — the perquisite of the honorable office of Lord of Misrule, Master of Merry Disports and Abbot of Unreason — should not come amiss to you. I have noted that thy paunch doth batten more speedily than thy purse, and its rotund proportions do now collude against the safety of thy gown. ’Tis time thou didst buy more ells of Leicester grey, and garb thyself anew, giving due allowance for thy future fat expansiveness. In fact, I’m sure that with so brave a knight of the tankard and table as thou art,

the lavish boards of this Christmas season will make such steps a clamorous need. Do you know that I have ordained and ordered so big a hackin for the Holy Day that 'twill take two cooks to heave it into the oven: so have I commanded them to be astir long ere the first cock crows, and have it on the fire, under penalty of a skimmington ride through Harbledown market place, as lazy trollops. Also Mistress Mince Pie, Dolly Dumpling, and Dame Plum Porridge will be more buxom than ever, and until Plough Monday will dispense a jocund reign, companied with all their usual retinue of doughty viands. There shall be floods of lamb's wool, torrents of furmety, mountains of brawn, seas of sack and stout, cataracts of malmsey, and fountains of ale. The vintners of Gascony and Burgundy shall loose their stop-cocks at the will of my cellarer; there shall be boars' heads and pavos — "

" Enow, my Lord, enow! " interrupted the Friar, as he compressed his lips with an expression of pain and worry totally inconsistent with the jovial trio of contiguous chins; — " thou wouldst tempt me beyond my strength. Consider my vocation, and speak of the beauties of fasting and abstinence, sanctity of hunger and self-denial, loveliness of bread and water, and how the spirit grows fat and strong on them, and more able to combat the Prince of Darkness. Discourse of spiritual foods, my Lord, — of scriptural texts and proverbs, psalms, liturgies, and prayers that nourish and expand the godly part of a man. Tell me of hungry caverns, rather than well-stored larders, sterile wind-swept moors, instead of tables which groan under steaming dishes. Thou knowest I am a weak man. 'Tis

said the devil does love a too full stomach, and often lurks around the dishes of a holy feast and entereth the heart of many a godly man by way of the gullet. I have opined that in the jousts with Satan a man's stomach is the most vital point, and in there his poison shafts are most like to find lodgement and start cankerous wounds which in time worketh corruption to the entire corporation. So I would fortify my dietary with wise and sacred maxims; I would armor my digestion with pious conceptions, and be a spiritual Apicus — a sufferer from edacity of soul feasts. I would so fill my mouth with sanctitude that no intemperance or gross gluttony could find passage therein."

"Thou art a good sermoner, Friar; but I tell thee, man, that this season my sirloins will be fatter and more savory than ever before. For five months past have my geese and ducks been dieted on oats, chestnuts, and parings of apple, and the flavor of their flesh will — "

"I pr'ythee stop, my Lord," groaned the Friar: "thou knowest I do much incline me to a weakness for duck. Lord be with me!"

"—Furthermore, Friar, I have ordered a new and bigger wassail bowl from the potter at London — of twelve pottles capacity — twelve measures of excellent hippocras, ale or French wine, and — "

"Lord have mercy! "

"— And I have ordained, designed, and ordered that the wassail shall be richer and more spicy — I will concoct it myself, and mix it with a sprig of blessed rosemary. It shall have more generous apportionments of toast and nutmeg, crabs — "

“ *Sancta Maria mater Dei!* ”

“ — Crabs and rosy-cheeked pippins shall bob on its surface, nodding health and hilarity to all: ginger and cloves — ”

“ *Ohe! jam satis. Nunc dimittis!* ”

— “ Shall be in bountiful portions. Venison, custards, and capons, snipes, woodcocks, and quail will be attendant on my table. Fourscore boars have I bandaged for to make brawn. My pipkins shall be in sore travail with the weight of many puddings.”

The Baron stopped and looked at his companion. The Friar sighed. Perplexity and anguish had secured a difficult footing on the sleek and rounded contours of his face, and now brooded there, evidently out of place, and looking incongruous with the twinkling eyes and the ineffaceable lines of merriment. He clasped his hands solemnly, and gazed mournfully at the logs burning in the great fireplace. Two big beads of perspiration — one on each brow, — brought forth partly by the heat of the fire and partly by the mental strain, coursed slowly down his florid cheeks.

“ Yet, that is not all,” continued the Baron, driving home his wedge; “ I would likewise mention incidentally that I have engaged for the high-days the talents and the services of two Castilian dancers, who will coach it from London and be with us by Christmas Eve. I wot these damsels will frisk it with a lively step and give us much rare entertainment with their gavottes, rigadoons, and blithesome galopades. I did see them gambol and whirl a morris in Drury Lane, all bedight with bells and gay Indian scarfs. Most round were their bosoms, and red their smiling lips. Their eyes flashed

and sparkled like old wine i' the sunlight. Their kirtles came midway 'tween their hips and knees, as though they fain would not further hide what God had made so beautiful."

The Baron paused to see how told his words.

Several successive beads of sweat chased each other down the Friar's rubicund face in the course marked by the first. He sighed again more deeply; his lips moved as though in prayer, and he fingered the beads of his rosary. The mirth-rucks about his eyes and mouth tightened and straightened themselves into lines of pain.

The Baron went on:—"So have I commanded that there be no dearth of mistletoe in all my halls and chambers. In this season of good will let us all have young hearts, and give rein to wanton folly. During the intervals of our high and low masses, our complins, vespers and magnificats we shall offer up hymns and orisons to Erycina and her little son, to Momus, Bacchus, and Fornax. Those dancers are most roguish wenches, and even the thin blood of an old man could well run warm and quick at sight of them, and make one crave the license of the sacred mistle. I took thee for a man of red blood, Friar,—a man of such generous righteousness that thou couldst temper and harmonize the cold ichor of piety with the good red fluid of human veins, without affront to either. I held thee to be a man of such large charity and benevolence that thou couldst hob-nob cheek-and-jowl with the devil, and yet keep thy peace with Heaven."

"My Lord," replied the mendicant, "consider my cloth—bear in mind my holy profession, think on my vows, and urge not the point."

“ And so do I, most worthy man of God, nor see I anything in the office of Lord of Misrule that comports not with sincere religion and a devout heart. Hence, knowing thee to be a most capable man, and one who can spring a quip, turn a jest, trill a canzonet, or even shed a tear, if need be — whichsoever the occasion calls for — I have asked thee to take charge of my Christmas ceremonies and heartsome festivities, believing that no master, an thou wilt, could be more acceptable to the company or hold a merrier sway. What sayest thou? ”

“ Last Christmastide, my Lord, rememberest thou how I did eat and drink o’er much at the tavern of the Blue Goose in Canterbury? ”

“ I did hear it so rumored, Friar. ”

“ Aye, I wot you did, and the gossip went broadcast the land as the seed of the thistle. The tattlers did shake it to the winds and wag their heads in shocked sanctimony. ‘ Friar Snicke,’ they said, ‘ the pharisee and hypocrite — that reputed minister of Heaven, did sing bawdy ballads, kiss the bar-maid, and drank more ale than the captain of the Welsh guards. ’

“ Thus it went on till out of sheer mortification I took a journey to Woldmer Forest, built me there a leaky, lowly hut, and abided therein forty days and nights, doing much fasting and penance, and inflicting divers bodily hurts on myself to subjugate my carnality. Such little food as I took was roots and haw berries, my drink was stagnant morass water teeming with bugs and frog spawn ; I breathed the raw, dank mists, slept on muggy stones, kept burrs in my clogs ; mine huke was a goat’s hide ; I was circumvested

in mud; and all the while I praised God continually, said prayers and sang dulia and doxology without surcease. So did I chasten my flesh till the sick and needy sinners sent for me, and I came forth reluctantly, much benefited, however, and with a firmer grasp on things true and righteous."

"And was there jot or tittle of truth in the gossip of the malicious slanderers?"

"The ale was good, my Lord, and my memory is bad. You know there is a notion to the effect that during Christmastide the devil and all his imps are bound fast in hell, and are impotent to work or devise ill till the holy time be past. So inclining me to this doctrine, within the hallowed days I have always been more merciful to my flesh, and give it chance to taste temperately of good worldly things of this transitory estate. I have held it safe to be less discretionary and rigorous in the performance of my holy offices. If the Evil One be so shackled and gyved, then can he not pounce like a kite on him who runs but a little space from the path of strict virtue. When the devil regains his liberty I turn again to the narrow wynd of rectitude."

"Marry, well said, Friar!" exclaimed the Baron, somewhat triumphantly. "And what matter, then, if thou takest the office and allow a long rein to enjoyment?"

The Friar arose and puckered his lips. He turned to the oriel window and looked wistfully across the heath to where the Stour glittered in its distant valley like a slender falchion of silver.

"I will take it under advisement, my Lord," he said, turning to the Baron. "My conscience is not altogether

easy. The Scriptures give no authority for the doctrine. It may not be true. I will spend the night in prayer — ”

“ Did I mention, Friar, how red the lips of those dancers were? ” put in the Baron.

“ Ay, my Lord, and I doubt not the devil is the artist who paints a maiden’s lips.”

“ And their ankles and their calves, good Friar — did I speak of them? ”

“ Not that I heard, my Lord, but there be many temporal things to which my ears refuse an audience. A churchman, my Lord, takes nor heed nor hearing of such follies. He beholds men and women only as souls sans body and sans sex.”

“ Did I tell thee further that the damsels imparted to me in confidence and secrecy that they did have a lusty penchant for a man of orders — especially if he be portly and well-fed — who could give them absolution for any petty sins or malfeasances which, through the tendency thereto bequeathed them by Mother Eve, they might commit? ”

“ Nay, nay, my Lord, you told me nothing of it, nor do I wish such idle talk of girls to pollute the portals of mine ears, where only solemn masses, motets, and well-spoken words of gospel should sound and reverberate. Let thy utterances be such, and I will guttle them as eagerly as the desert doth the dew. The seeds of sin do creep in through the ears, and in the soil of the mind do sprout and germinate, and blossoming into evil thought, do ripen into evil deed. I must be gone — farewell, my liege, I — ”

“ Think on my proposition, Friar; and as thou thinkest

well, so answer well. Such Christmas as I mean to have will recompense thee for a year of Lent in Woldmer Forest. Think on't all — damsels, wassail, mistletoe, high-heaped platters, — and thou seneschal and suzerain of them all.”

The Friar turned in the door; “ Adieu, my Lord,” he said, making a slight obeisance, — “ so far as is consonant with my sense of right I will bear them all in mind, and return my answer ere the falling of Christmas Eve. Adieu, my Lord.”

CHAPTER II.

“ When Christmastide comes in like a bride,
With holly and ivy clad,
Twelve days in the year, much mirth and good cheer
In every household is had.”

The Baron de Burleyville was a stern man, brusque, bluff, short of word and quick of deed — a man not to be trifled with; a terror to his enemies, and a tower of strength and joy to his friends.

War was his recreation: his playthings the engines of war. He wore armor most of the time; and never a night did his great oaken bed, or table dormant, as 'twas called, know his weight, but it also knew the heaviness of his great two-handed sword. He slept with it in his arms, his cheek and lips pressed against the silver, gold, and steel of its cruciform hilt. “It is my wife now,” he would say, — “my love, since Arletta died.”

And the Lady Arletta had been dead many a year — nearly eighteen — ever since the birth of fair-haired little Brilliana, the first and only child of the marriage. The Baron had seen her buried in the God's acre of the small ivy-clad chapel next to Lanfranc's Lazar House. He held the puling girl-baby in his arms the while, and when the rites were over he wheeled around, one hand holding his child, the other carrying his sword. He spoke not a word, shed not a tear. With bowed head he marched back toward his castle, followed by the silent stream of his

awe-stricken tenants and servitors. He paused a moment at the Black Prince's well for a drink of water, thence crossed over to the Priory, where after kneeling before the altar for a moment in prayer, he arose, kissed St. Thomas's shoe, and continued his homeward way.

Arrived at the castle, the infant was given into the charge of Critch, a young wife of the fief. "See to it," said the Baron, "that she be fed and in good fettle for the seal and baptism to-morrow. I will take the sword to Canterbury and have it consecrated and dipped in holy water, as is customary ere the christening."

Ah, could that sword speak, what tales might it not tell! Could it but write its autobiography, what a ring of steel on steel there would be in the narrative! — what clash and clamor, what cries of men and dash of horse, mingling with the blare of trumpet, hiss of arrows, twang of crossbows, and sibilant shriek of sling stones! Softer notes, too, there would be in the history — the sighs of lovelorn maidens, and the low, impassioned vows of strong warriors, made gentle as doves through the potent spells of that small wizard and boy-god; passionate strain of amorous songs, wail of archlute, trill of hautboy, and quavering tones of harmoniphon; whispered love-words, tender as the sigh of reeds in the zephyr. Yes, it would be a story to make the heart beat quick with every passion known to man.

For this sword had long been an heirloom in an ancient family whose archives bore testimony of many deeds of love and valor. Tradition (which no one dared contradict), said it was brought over from Normandy by the Baron's forbears, and that it had also been taken on the crusades

by some dauntless champion of the blood; that the great first Richard had wielded it before the walls of Jerusalem and smote many a Saracen athwart the midriff to their great discomfort.

Be that as it may. The verification of such questions we will leave to clerks and learned pundits. The fact is that for many generations the sword had been a thing of sacred and mystic import in the family of de Burleyville. At the end of its handle was a small knob or projection of steel. Cut in alto-relievo on the apex of this knob, were certain characters and figures, discernible among which were a wreath and fylfot. Gossip had it that the legendary letters constituted a motto, the terms of which were never imparted to any save members of the Burleyville house. So much for conjecture. It was a matter of common knowledge to all of Kent that for ages it had been the immutable law and custom to brand each member of the house with the device on the sword. When a child was born this ceremony was performed immediately before the christening; and if marriage brought some one into the fold, scarcely were the nuptial rites over before the seal must be put upon the newcomer, be he male or female.

The burning of this seal on the left shoulder made one a Burleyville in all faith and blood forever; and all the rights, privileges, titles, and immunities of such an estate became one's for all time. Henceforward he became as one with all others who bore the seal. No matter how great the provocation, never could he raise hand against them, never break faith with them; but was always bound by all the holy

honor of religion and knighthood to protect, aid, and cherish them regardless of consequences to himself.

The sword was borne and kept with strictest care by the senior representative of the line. He also usually placed the brand upon the novitiates. Though any one (and only they) who bore the brand could impart it. Should such an one through mistake or accident place the emblem on shoulder of paynim, Ethiop, or bitterest enemy, yet would he be bound by all the solemn obligations conditioned upon the deed. The strange procedure had its origin in hoary antiquity when men swore dark unbreakable oaths over the bones of their fathers and the relics of the saints, and signed them with their blood. To violate such a compact in letter or spirit was eternal dishonor. In the grim earnestness of the times, these bonds held their affiants with all the force of superstition and a high, but misguided, sense of honor.

So was it that the sword and seal of de Burleyville stood for many arcana; but perhaps the strangest of them all was the bitter feud and implacable enmity toward the House of Guilforth.

The Baron de Burleyville and the Marquis Guilforth were near neighbors, but hereditary enemies. For many generations a deadly feud had existed between their respective families. Living in their castellated strongholds they had long carried on unrelenting warfare against each other, characterized by deeds of rapine, bloodshed and violence whenever opportunity presented itself. This hostility was shared by every one of their retainers and liegemen down to the humblest villein in his wattled hut. Though honorable knights in all things else, in regard to this rankling animosity they

would go to any extreme to do an injury to one another. Treachery, ambush, low cunning — snares — all were invoked and countenanced.

As an excuse for this insidious stab-in-the-back sort of guerrilla warfare, which appeared so strange between honorable knights of the realm and Tertiaries of Holy Church, it was reputed that the feud had risen in Normandy long ere the Conqueror came over, and on Senlac field, made himself master of Anglia. When de Burleyville and Guilforth (so ran the tale) had been rival claimants for some advowson or preferment, and a cowardly misrepresentative of one of the houses (no one now knew which) had been guilty of some dastardly breach of trust and knighthood in taking an unfair advantage. So was the feud started, and it had subsequently been imbibed with all its rancor by every succeeding root, branch, and bud of the two family trees. The passage of time but served to infiltrate it more thoroughly into the blood, until, in later generations, mutual hate between the houses became second nature.

Because of the grim nature of that member of the de Burleyville line with which we have to do, perhaps in him the terrible strength of the hereditary hate had reached its fullest consummation. While the Black Prince lived the Baron had kept active in the field, serving under his standard; and many a fair acre of France had tasted of blood drawn forth by the lethal stroke of the sword of de Burleyville. But now, the Baron, like many others of his class, chafed under the peace policy of King Richard. Hence, it was natural that in his idle hours he should turn to the brabble with Guilforth for amusement, and find time to fan

the flame of embroilment till it blazed with a white heat in his heart.

In the meantime, however, Christmas was come — to-morrow was St. Thomas' Day — and animosity must be buried for the twelve days at least. Let the contents of the genial black-jacks, with their silver rims and leathern sides, drown all thought of accursed Guilforth. Even the sacred sword would be taken off and laid away in the oaken hutch which stood in the Baron's chamber, and where he kept his court dress of gold-braided and bejewelled pourpoints, doublets, and hose.

The Baron called the Lady Brilliana to him: "Daughter," he said, as he sat before the fire in his huge arm chair, and slowly stroked his bushy red beard, — "ungird my sword and lay it away in the accustomed place. Thou knowest I like not for the hands of vassals to touch it lest there be sore need thereof. The rising of to-morrow's sun means the sunset for a time of all ill-will, black passions and deeds of warfare. I have asked that good palmer, Friar Snicke, to be mine Abbas Stultorum this year. As thou knowest, he is a man of most jovial port, and is dowered with much love of God, good cheer, and the ladies."

"A fitting man for the place, certes, my honored Sire; and hath he agreed to sway the sceptre of gay disport for us?"

"Not yet, my Heart; but he doth weigh the matter in his grave consideration. There were dubitations in his mind as to whether the acceptance of so temporal a throne would comport graciously with his professions."

"I judge 'tis the accusations of the Lollards which doth

work in him, my Lord. That Wyclif hath opened the eyes of England, and pricked many a calloused conscience."

"True, my Sweet, but I think no fillips of conscience doth perturb this Friar Snicke. He juggles with good and bad deeds so skilfully that I doubt not he keeps the sabaoth of Heaven and Hell a-guessing. Every earnest he places with Old Scratch is offset by deeds of kindly benevolence."

"Then he hath no faith in the Pardoners?"

"Not he. He's Lollard to the extent that he holds only penance and toward acts will expiate sin. Nor does he put overmuch trust in relics, though he carries in his tippet what he claims to be a toe-nail of St. Gertrude and a scale of a fish caught by St. Peter. He purchased these in Rome, where he went on a pilgrimage in his early youth when the Black Death was making a charnel house of England. The nail, he says, cost him twelve marks, and the fish-scale six nobles."

"A goodly price; and as they came dear, so I venture their virtues are great."

"'Tis thought so, my sweet wench, yet owing to a confusion of the identity of the two it is difficult to pass upon and gage their benign properties. The truth is that neither the worthy Friar nor any other man can say with any degree of certainty which is the sainted toe-nail and which is the sacred fish-scale."

"But do not the respective charms and protections which are ascribed to them proclaim which is one and which is t'other, my noble Sire?"

"Not easily, my child. Relics of St. Gertrude are sup-

posed to guard against rats and fleas, while those of St. Peter protect from lightning, distempers of the stomach, and highwaymen. Now the Friar will never permit these holy treasures to leave his keeping that others may have opportunity to test their powers; and as he, himself, is not a householder, he hath but little trouble with rats and fleas: his frock is safeguard against highwaymen: lightning bothers him no more than it does most men; and as for belly ailments — he hath the bowels of an estrich, which, I warrant, serve him to more purpose than would all the relics in Christendom.”

As the Baron ceased speaking the clear tuneful notes of a trumpet sounded without the castle gates. There was also the clatter of hoofs, the barking of dogs, and the sound of men’s voices, noisy and hilarious.

It was Courtenay, Archbishop of Canterbury, and his gay hunting party. With him were the Abbot of Aylesford, the fat Prior of St. Martins, and a goodly crowd of reeves, bailiffs, esquires, and yeoman archers from neighboring estates.

“Greeting to thee, my Lord de Burleyville, and may all the blessings of this favored time be with thee,” said the debonair Courtenay, as the Baron came forth to bid them welcome. Then added, “We come to ask that thou join us in a chase of the red deer. It hath been brought to our ears that the dingle back of Herne Hill doth abound with them. But a few days since my manicle did with his bow and arrows kill a fallow pricket there, though he was out with no intent to hunt. Knowing thy fondness for the

chase we could not pass thy gates without asking thee to give us the grace of thy worthy companionship."

"By my troth! and that I will, my good Lord Archbishop. It were well that a haunch of venison be eaten to-morrow in honor of St. Thomas. Yet I hope that in following thee we shall not be given such an ensample as that set by the bold Edmund, a predecessor of thine in the Holy See, who was such a famous poacher that he had the whole countryside a-howling with his ravishments."

"Nay, nay, my Lord, be not fearful as to that; we have our charters giving us the rights of venery throughout Kent. We have no design of taking e'en a titlark in violation of another's rights."

The Baron replied, "It is well, your Holiness;" and then he ordered his hostler to bring forth his horse, which had been turned loose to nibble and exercise in a nearby meadow.

While the groom went to catch and saddle the animal, the hunters, at the behest of the Baron, dismounted and entered the hall to quaff a jolly bumper or two.

In the party was a tall, lissome, dark-eyed, and silent young esquire, who, while the others were gathered around the table drinking ale and springing jests, with a pretense of cold hands, quietly betook himself to the fire at the far end of the hall, where in a chimney-seat the Lady Brilliana was sewing a tapestry.

The young man had seen her at an upper window before leaving his horse. He had noted, even at a distance, her wondrous suit of hair, her beauty and grace of bearing. And he had slyly stuck his spur in the off side of his horse

so that the mettlesome creature reared and plunged, and thus attracted the eye of the maiden at the same time that a skilful pressure of his rider's knee brought him nearer to the window, where he suddenly became calm.

The girl had also noticed the gallant and noble appearance of the handsome young esquire, as distinguishing him from the others, even before the antics of his steed made him more forcibly conspicuous.

When he had drawn rein under her window, as maidens will, she could but let her eyes meet his; and, perchance, a mischievous little smile was suffered to flit about her lips, or twinkle in her eyes.

So will the tell-tale eyes of young people give their hearts away and betray their thoughts. And Cupid is born, and battens in the sly glances of young eyes.

Upon getting closer and seeing the maiden better, the cavalier's heart had begun an unwonted thumping; for he observed that the lady's beauty increased as the distance between them diminished. Thereupon he had regarded her with an eye so interested and intent, that she at length became abashed and begruntled, and withdrew to one side where he could not see her, but where, nevertheless, a lucky chink in the casement gave her a view of him. Taking thus unfair advantage, she had seen the woebegone look which overspread his face as he lost sight of her, and also, the sigh when he turned his horse's head, rode from beneath the window, and dismounted with the other members of his party.

When she knew what was going on, and that the hunting party would come into her father's hall and take brief

refreshment, the Lady Brilliana hastily bethought herself of her unfinished piece of tapestry and of how admirable a place the chimney-seat was in which to settle herself and ply her needles and bodkins.

And there was she by the time the party had all gotten in — just as though she had been there all the forenoon, diligently working on the brassard of Sir Giles de Laval, a scene from whose bloody life she was depicting in the embroidery; and there the keen sight of the young esquire spied her as he passed into the room; and, as we have seen, it was not long before a convenient numbness of fingers brought him to the fire and near her.

He had a good view of her as he stood there, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, though the draperies which hung about the fireplace and chimney-seat to keep out the draughts concealed her from the rest of the company.

Well she saw him too — to which fact the false stitches she made in Sir Giles's brassard will testify to this day. Apparently, however, she had no thought beyond the next movement of her needle, so intent upon her work she appeared.

Who knows whether it was purposely that she dropped her bodkin so that it rolled to the feet of the youth? It might have been the prank of wayward Fate, who loves to play bandy ball with human destinies. Or it may have been a trick of Dan Cupid, who brought it about in furtherance of some of his cunning plots. No one will ever know. But the bodkin did so fall, and the chivalrous esquire heard its jingle, though seeing it not, and at once went down on his knees to search for it.

“It is behither thee,” said the maiden, as he awkwardly grovelled around, his thoughts so far from the bodkin that scarce could he have found it had it been thrust through his nose.

“Ay,” he said, finding it at last when she pointed it out to him, “and I pray thee, pardon the sloth of one who is but little accustomed to seek and handle the implements of women.”

The maiden laughed — a low, merry little laugh it was, sounding like the sweet purling of a pebbly brook.

“And now,” continued the youth — going down on his knees before her, and holding tight to the bodkin — “what reward wilt thou bestow upon the knight who has recovered thy treasure?”

“And what would he have, Sir?” she questioned, an expression of sly mischief and blushes dashing across her face.

“I would have, sweet Lady — I would have leave to kiss the fair hand into which I deliver the prize.”

“Nay, nay, thy guerdon is denied. It cannot be: ’twere not meet.”

“Then will I hold that I have recovered.”

“But my tapestry, Sir, — it must be done. The Gryphon hath no tail, and Sir Giles must not be left without his dexter brassard. ’Tis unknightly.”

“Better that, fair Lady, than an honest man go unrewarded for honest services, especially when the payment of his wage is but an easy thing which will not impoverish the giver but will make rich and happy the recipient.”

“Thou ratest thy charge at a false and too high a value,

Sir. I hold it not extortionate, but unseemly: I never saw thee before; I know neither thy name nor breeding."

"Noble are my name and birth, Lady. Were it otherwise I durst not ask the boon. Howsoever, it were better that I do not discover them to you."

"But my bodkin, Sir! — I must have my bodkin," she insisted, with a smack of petulance, femininely flitting back to the main issue.

With humble firmness he told her that she should have it upon yielding to his request.

"Then take it!" she fired, — "I must have my bodkin — Sir Giles's brassard" —

"Ho-ho, ho-ho, what do I see! — a youth and maid a-loving," interrupted a strident voice close upon them.

The young man dropped the small white hand he was holding to his lips, and turned to face the fat Prior of St. Martins, who came staggering upon them.

The rest of the hunters had returned to their horses and ridden away. The Prior was left behind, as the ale which he drank in the hall, added to that which he had been drinking all morning from his private flagon, had made him too unsteady to mount his horse in safety. Being somewhat sleepy, he had, therefore, readily consented to take the advisement of the Archbishop, and abide at the castle until his head was cleared and his limbs more willing to obey his will.

"*Pardonnez-moi*," laughed the Prior, his huge bulk shaking convulsively with maudlin mirth — "I knew not I was breaking into a lovers' bower. The fire in the middle of the hall grows low, and I bethought me to seek the

chimney-bench, where I might find more warmth and keep company with sweet Morpheus for a time. But I see that Venus doth occupy the chimney-seat. She were a better companion than my Morpheus, by my faith, ha-ha! ”

He threw himself down by the Lady Brilliana; whereupon she recoiled from him as though he were a viper.

“ *Pardieu! Mirabile dictu!* ” continued the Prior, pointing at the youth, — “ do my eyes deceive me? Is this not young Aylwin Guilforth? Since when was the cuckoo welcomed to the robin’s nest? May I ask what benignant rain hath quenched the fierce fires of hate that whilom raged betwixt the houses of de Burleyville and Guilforth, that the tender scions of the two names do now woo and coo at each other as very doves? ’Tis news indeed. How and by whom was it brought about? Methought the ancient feud had so wrapped its deadly tentacles around the rival hearts that no power of heaven or earth could tear loose its stiffened coils.”

“ It hath not been brought about, your Grace,” replied Aylwin, the sole child and son of the Marquis Guilforth, flashing red as he spoke. “ It hath not been brought about—what you behold hath come about by strange chances. The maiden knows me not. Nor did her father. This hunting hood concealed in part my features from him—my features which I doubt he would have known without it, so seldom hath he seen me, and so rapidly doth a young man grow and change.”

“ And thou madest bold to enter the lion’s den? ”

“ Yea. I had to, or leave the party. I was loath to give up the hunt, and not unwilling to be adventuresome. So I

came. Few of them knew me save the Archbishop ; and he I bound to secrecy."

"So thou entered thy enemy's hall and took bread and wine at his board?"

"Not so, I took none of it; I quit the gathering and came hither."

"To make sly love to this tender, innocent young dove?"

"Nay, nay, it all befell by the natural consequence of mere accident."

"And the maiden knew thee not?"

"Not till thou didst divulge the secret."

The Prior sidled nearer to Brilliana, and took her hand.

"Let the damsel speak for herself: speaketh he the truth, my pretty?"

"So far as I know, your Grace?"

The Prior continued:

"And this little hand so soft and fair, dost thou not know that thy father would smite it from its arm did he know that the lips of a Guilforth had touched it?"

The girl made no reply; but the fast beating of her heart did not suffice to keep the rose tints in her cheeks. Her big eyes shot timorous glances about her, as though she contemplated flight. The young esquire stood by nervously wiggling his foot and biting his lip.

"Take my advice, my youth," the Prior said to him, "and get thee hence speedily. If thy identity be brought by any mischance to the Baron's men-at-arms thy life were not worth a farthing. Also, since knowing thee, this child is much affrighted."

"I would not have it so; I will haste away," Aylwin

said. "Farewell, sweet maid, farewell, good Prior. When a lion has lost his sheep's skin he must leave the company of the lambs."

As he left young Guilforth took a last look at Brilliana; but she turned her head and ignored him. Then she sat still and gazed into the fire, and Aylwin went out, mounted his horse, and galloped away.

A hoarse snort at her side roused the Lady Brilliana from her reverie. Looking around she saw that the Prior had fallen asleep, with his head thrown back against the stone chimney facing, and his mouth wide open. Whereupon she shook the sleeper till he started up with some semblance of consciousness.

"Good Father," she said, still shaking him, "promise me to say nothing to my sire of how thou didst find a Guilforth under his roof. It would enrage him so that I know not what would come of it. Dost hear? Dost promise?"

"Ay, ay, I hear — I promise," grumbled the sleepy Prior.

"And thou understandeth me, and wilt remember?" — shaking him again and harder.

The Prior grew peevish: "Yea, by Heaven! yea, girl," he snapped; "but get thee away and disturb me no more, or by the hearts of the Nine Worthies I will let it out though it be with my last breath."

CHAPTER III.

“ A Country Lasse, browne as a berry,
Blith of blee, in heart as merry,
Cheeks well fed, and sides well larded,
Every bone with fat flesh guarded,
Meeting merry Kemp by chaunce,
Was Marrian in his Morrice daunce.
Her stump legs with bels were garnisht;
Her browne browes with sweating varnisht:
Her browne hips, when she was lag
To win her ground, went swig a swag;
Which to see all that came after
Were replete with mirthfull laughter.
Yet she thumpt it on her way
With a sportly hey de gay:
At a mile her daunce she ended,
Kindly paid and well commended.”

— *Kemp's Nine Days Wonder.*

So it fell that the following day was that of St. Thomas, being in the latter part of the reign of the good — yet weak — Second Richard.

And rosy and rimy did it dawn, its first peep of light awakening to querulous activity the drowsy jackdaws that roosted in the great yews just outside of the de Burleyville garden croft. The lazy sun seemed to be yawning and stretching himself as he slowly rose from his bed behind the distant Kentish hills, and shot a few golden-red, weak rays, blinking as a new-born babe, upon the frosty top of the old Dane John Hill, which stands sentinel-like in the field near

Canterbury. Unaffected by the slight warmth, the frost sparkled and glimmered as powdered crystal.

In a little while the sun grew more energetic, and climbed higher. A great beam of light was thrown dancing over the topmost twigs of the big oaks in the Cathedral cloister. There it glistened for a brief space, and then hastened to a more glorious destiny. It shimmered over the trees and ricocheted to the resplendent windows of the Cathedral, illuminating them with a responsive blaze of beauty.

Then the bells pealed forth — the great mellow Cathedral bells — summoning the monks to matins and prime. Strongly, clearly, the notes went out, rolling rhythmically through the cold air. Sweetly, softly, they returned from the hills in echoes tender and quavering.

The monks came from their dormitories in double file — a long, silent, somber line, which enters the church at the south door, passes up the nave, and, reaching the choir, spreads itself out fan-shape. The mass for St. Thomas is held, a long, long service with much singing and prayer. During the singing four monks are appointed by the abbot to pump the organ. It is a post much coveted on winter mornings, as it is better to exercise than to sing when the nipping morning air, innocent of all heat, pierces one's worsted frock.

A squat, pursy figure had emerged from the lodge just out of the priory gate as the joyous pean of the bells died away in a low concert amid the Southdown hills. The lodge was that which had been built for the accommodation of pilgrims, belated wayfarers, and mendicants, and its late aforementioned occupant was Friar Snicke.

Having passed the night beneath the hospitable little roof, the Friar now came forth to perform his morning devotions in the Chapel of the Martyrdom at the shrine of à Becket.

His face, beaming and rubicund, spoke peace and good will to all the world, after an undisturbed night's rest on the fresh, clean straw and rushes that had constituted his comfortable and sweet-scented bed. He was ever a man of most adaptable nature. A quick succession of extremes from comfort to discomfort never worried him in the least. From one atmosphere of surroundings he could pass to another totally different, with perfect adjustment of spirit, conduct and equipoise. From a wedding to a funeral he would go, and so demean himself that he was a joyous and most welcome guest at one, and a solace and help at the other. Wherever he happened to be he was usually exactly what the time and occasion called for. Throughout Kent he was a well-known personality. The bounds of the ordinary *limitour* were not for him; he went and came when and where he pleased; and no one questioned his right. Whether it was Friar Snicke in summer-time, with the beads of perspiration oozing from the creases in his fat round face and standing like diamonds on his shiny tonsured pate; or Friar Snicke in winter, with his globular cheeks red with cold, and his snub nose redder still; and his puggy, stocky form enveloped in his long gown of hand-woven woollens — he was always welcomed by prince or pauper.

Faults had the Friar — as every other man, — but they were of the human, forgivable kind. He loved his cup

and a good dinner; and it was whispered that he had an eye for fair damsels and buxom dames, and that he had even been known to look askance at shapely bosoms and well-turned ankles. Also, that despite his vocation, he was not averse to exercising the suffrages of the mistletoe when opportunity came his way.

Yet what difference made it to those who knew him? Withal, he was a kindly man, dispensing to the needy what surplus alms he took, and ever ready to lend heart and hand in the doing of a good deed. Let the captious ones who chided him be taken amuck with some dire distemper, and swift was the messenger which these same chafers sent for Friar Snicke. At the bedside of lord or serf he was ever ready with his soul-simples of absolution and prayer, cheery words of faith and hope. It was said that he could assail with such benign influence and power, that under the bright spell of his assurance, blackest villains would sometimes smile on their deathbed, being convinced of salvation.

A tale ran that on a certain occasion the Friar was called to administer to the perturbed mind of the sick wife of a miller. The worthy woman had been sorely taken with cramps after an unstinted repast of garlies and buttermilk. It was Friday, the thirteenth of the month, following a stormy night in which a lone hound had howled lugubriously around her house. So the good dame very naturally thought that her end was near and certain.

"I once kissed a man other than my husband," she moaned to the Friar, as he sat by holding her hand soothingly, and harkened to the confessions.

“ Dreadful! dreadful! ” murmured the Friar, his sympathetic eyes resting on the homely features of the sufferer.

“ It was years ago,” she continued.

“ Yes, yes, go on — mercy is plenteous. There is hope.”

“ And the man I bussed was — ”

“ Who? ” asked the Friar, a spasm of pain having cut short the patient’s sentence.

“ You — you, good Father.”

“ Alack! it had slipped my mind. True, true — ’twas in the days of my wayward youth when I was weak in principle and strong of stomach.”

“ And canst thou give me shrift for it? ”

“ In very surety: I forgive thee. But never do it again.”

Having passed through the eastern gate, the Friar entered the nave or aula, thence crossing to the Chapel of the Martyrdom, he bent his knees to the figures representing virtue and vice in the mosaic pavement, and there offered up a brief prayer before the resplendent shrine of à Becket. Leaving the northwest transept, he entered the choir, and joined the crowd of monks, taking part with them in their services and orisons.

Sweet was the singing of the Gloria in Excelsis on that winter’s morning which ushered in a Christmas season of the time long ago. Clear and strong the voices of the monks rose and fell beneath the vaulted and fretted dome of the apse. Back from the crypts and transepts surged the full, rich notes, as though reluctant to leave the vast and stately church. Returning, they were tenderer and softer, their wanderings through the storied aisles and among the legended pillars having lent them, apparently, finer sympathies and a more delicate assertiveness.

Echoes and old memories, like the Prodigal Son, come back to us subdued, tenderer, and sweetened. Though their initiative be harsh and trying, yet may they run the gauntlet of circumstance through the circuits of time, and return to us some day in the guise of regenerate and welcome guests.

In Trinity Chapel the spurred, colored, and armored figure of the Black Prince reposed on its stone mausoleum and gazed heavenward with its immutable expression of masterfulness. It was no mean artist who had wrought the effigy. Perhaps it is the atmosphere, the association of ideas in the beholder, which lends the figure so much expression, so much meaning. Antiquity, tradition, romance, history and war hover about the tomb in almost palpable forms. There is always a weird and sentimental sort of interest enlinked with the graves of the historical dead. In the image of the Black Prince the strange skill of the sculptor had more than served to heighten this interest. In some indefinable way he had put into the face all the solemn and austere majesty of death, and yet at the same time it was alive with symbolism. The countenance, stern, calm, and impassive, appeared to be that of one who, having removed to some transcendent plane of existence, could now regard temporal affairs without concern, while he brooded forever on the magnitudes of eternity.

From the beam across the pulpitum the two cherubim and the images of St. Mary and St. John looked down. Their attitude was that of attention, as though they harked to the rich melody. While the misereres of the choir cornice

and fresco, stony and stolid, gloated over all with their faces of immitigable woe.

Having performed what he deemed a sufficiency of devotion, the Friar emerged from the Cathedral at the great door in the southwest transept. Just beyond the threshold he encountered Bors, the Cathedral watchman, who had descended by the spiral stair from the tower of St. Anselm, and was now on his way to breakfast. In one hand he held a lantern, and in the other a leash attached to the two great villainous-looking ban dogs, who with their master shared the task of guarding the sacred relics, treasures and remains of the Cathedral.

“Greeting to thee, Bors,” quoth the Friar, recovering from the start which the sudden appearance of the evil looking beasts had induced. “I wot thou hast slept at thy post — so late thou comest forth to do thy service to St. Thomas and crave his blessing on thy tardy head. By the holy St. Francis of Assisi, what beasts! Did not their wagging tails belie their savage visages, I might have sought such flight as increasing years and short fat legs admit of. All is well, I hope?”

“Yea, Father, from the pit under the sacristy to the pinnacle of the great tower — nothing is perturbed.”

“St. Bartholomew’s arm, St. Swinthin’s and St. Furseus’s heads, and the most sacred remains of the Saints Dunstan and Augustine lie unmolested, eh?”

“Certes, they so are by God’s grace, good Friar.”

“’Tis well. But the carbuncle of the generous Seventh Louis thou hast not yet spoken of, nor needest thou; for I myself did see it but now blazing like a comet in Becket’s

shrine. I tell thee news: for aught thy laggard self knowest, it may this moment be gracing the chatelaine of some Robbin's Bess, or lie imbedded in the foulest muck of the Ouse. A pretty man to leave thy duty to dogs while thou courttest slumber."

"Nay, nay, Father Snicke, thou dost misjudge me, — I slept not till the third crowing of the cock, by which time the coming day was faintly lurid over the eastern hills."

The sleepy Bors yawned, and raising the lantern, blew out its still burning taper. Rubbing his red eyes with a big rough finger, he passed on, followed by his dogs.

"A dull, heavy fellow," thought the Friar, casting a glance at the retreating figure of the guard, — "yet, I warrant, a dangerous one if aroused." Then drawing his hood closer about his ears, he set off down the road toward the castle of de Burleyville.

Arriving at the castle the Friar greeted the warder at the gate, and was suffered to pass on into the courtyard without interference or question. He proceeded as one having little doubt of his destination, and another moment found him rapping softly at a little door just within the postern gate.

With much clutter of bolts and chains the door opened, and Mother Critch advanced her portly person to the threshold, where she took her stand, with arms akimbo, completely blocking all passage in or out, while she shot her eyes over the Friar's head, and appeared not to see him at all, but gazed serenely into the morning sky.

"May St. Thomas snatch the horn of plenty from the hand of Ceres and pour its bounteous contents on thy

comely head, my good woman," said the Friar, as he folded his chubby hands across his umbilicus, and bowed profoundly.

There was no response.

"Greeting, greeting, most gracious nymph of savory pots and saucepans; may the Parcae spin thy life-thread all of gold; may Venus envy thy beauty, and Pallas thy wisdom. I wish thee all the joys which the season can bestow: —

' This month drink you no wine commixt with dregs;
Eat capons and fat hens with dumpling legs.' "

The Friar raised his folded hands to his chest; he tilted his head to one side, squinted his eyes, and looked up at the dame with a wanton smile and smirk.

Still she ignored him, while with supreme complacence she watched the movements of a raven perched on a hop-pole far out on the heath. The appetizing aroma of good cookery was now wafted through the door in puffs of white steam. The Friar sniffed it and began to prance with impatience.

"Marry, good wench," he pleaded in an humbler tone, "'tis time thou didst come down from thy high horse, and see a lowly man of God. The cold stings my face like hornets, and, by the Sacgrael, I smell beef and baked apples! Alack! Alack! thy conduct but proves the old adage, 'A cold heart in a comely form.' "

Despite her efforts to restrain it, a smile now tugged at the corners of the woman's mouth. She let her eyes fall till they rested scornfully on the Friar.

“I might have known ’twas thee—thou wapper-eyed jack-puddings. I thought the savor of my garlies and collops would bring thee before long.”

She turned on her heel and went back into the room. The Friar followed her quickly, closing the door as he entered.

“Ay, sweet wench, in seeking thy company I have the sanction of both my stomach and my heart.” He drew a stool up before the fire and sprawled out comfortably, loosened his hood and held the palms of his hands out toward the blaze. “And my heart being full of thee, I would have thee likewise fill my stomach.”

“A man of your calling should have no appetite: you should crave only the food of the spirit, especially on a saint’s day. Yet in mercy’s sake I will give you for breakfast some hot water and a crust of bread.”

“And why so chary of aliment, good dame? Thinkest thou ’tis Lenten time? Or have the king’s purveyors been hitherward? By faith! I’m no Cistercian white monk or criminous clerk who can live on liturgies: I’m a *frater minor*, a true Franciscan. Thyself as fat as a Michaelmas goose—hast thou no sympathy for me, a scrawny man. Holiness does wizen a man and make him as thin as the sigh of a lovelorn maiden.

“Now, gentle Mother Critch, my vocation forbids me flattery, yet it tells me speak from the heart, neither throttle truth, nor send it forth in suave raiment of hypocrisy and dissimulation. *Ergo*, sweet lady, shall I tell thee a pointed fact?”

“Speak, man,—I care not whether thy facts be as pointed

as thy appetite or as dull as thy wit. These men of God have their hearts in their belly, and would dine with Satan an he kept a good table."

The latter observation was volunteered as a sort of parenthetical soliloquy. There was a short pause, and then with a lattan dish of cakes in her hand, she stopped before him and added condemnatorily: "Didst thou but wax as eloquent for the Lord as thou dost for thy belly the devil would soon leave England."

"Ay, and go to France where he belongs, and be a pigmy among a nation of greater devils than himself. It were a sorry day for Satan; and I have more pity for him than to do't. For pity, good mother, is the measure of a man's spiritual height and stature. How many cubits of pity doth he stand in soul? How many pottles of pity doth his heart contain. That is the way I would test a person's godliness. The mean-spirited man pitieth nothing; but the man who, like myself, hath climbed to the Pelion of righteousness pitieth even the devil. So may you know me a holy man by my lofty essence of all-embracing compassion. I pity myself that thou givest me no ale or other staunch purveyance. I pity thee because thou knowest not how well it were for thy salvation if thou gavest me such. Even the ale I pity; for pity, 'tis said, is chief ingredient of love. And then to think, — poor ale! so cold and lonely in its rotund bowl — its mission unfulfilled, fast locked in a dim cupboard which smells of curds and cheese. Know, O beautiful but heartless woman, that ale hath a better purpose and grander destiny; and that good things were

given man and womankind for use according to that intention for which they were created.

“And what more glorious mission than to course through the brain of a godly man so that the cold and torpid hymns and preachments that lie embedded in its cells are warmed and stimulated into vocal activity. Then will the world be benefited, when through the mild and beneficent inspiration I am led to preach and prophesy and exude songs of praise, corrective exprobrations and sage moralities.”

Mother Critch came now and placed a large tray of steaming dishes across his knees. “Here, here, man,” she chided, “now stuff thy mouth till thy tongue can wag no longer. Thy talk is as confused as a Lincolnshire bull-running. Wilt thou promise to be silent if I give thee thy fill?”

“Chaste siren of the scullery, I would promise thee anything. Take this as an earnest of my taciturnity.”

He took a small sprig of rosemary from his tippet and handed her. Then smiling radiantly, he attacked his victuals.

Through the windows of the Lady Brilliana’s room in the high eastern tower the sun was now shooting a bar of red shimmering gold. It falls first upon the carved head of the bed, and then creeps slowly down till it shines on the hair of the sleeping maiden. Lingeringly and lovingly it plays on the bright tresses, as though the very fingers of the sun god toyed with the silken wisps and strans. All tousled in sleep, the locks stream about the pillow and encircle the face of the sleeper in an aureole glorious and

scintillant. Down, down creeps the light till it is on the lovely upturned face, all a-flush with the roses of healthy slumber. It reaches the mouth—the vermeil delectable pout of her semi-parted lips. There it appears to rest for a time as though sentient of its good fortune. A lead in the window now parted the beam, and one half of it fell upon her eye—the pink-white lid with its long—very long—fringe of jet.

The sleeper moved and stirred uneasily. She threw the silken coverlet with its heavy embroidery of stiff-figured knights and ladies a little lower. She moved again; her eyes opened blue and sparkling as dewy bluebells unfolding in the morning sun; and her arm bare and beauteous emerged from under the covering. What an arm! How rounded and shapely! How lily-white! It flexed gracefully as a swan's neck and fell above the maiden's head.

The girl lay idly thus for some moments, and looked dreamily out of the window. Then she arose and dressed. No sooner had she completed her toilet than Mother Critch came in, bringing her breakfast. Having greeted her affectionately, that worthy woman told her of the early advent of the Friar, and further detailed garrulously that sundry sportive parties of guisars and mummers had already come to the castle, singing their songs, making much revelry and begging gifts and favors according to custom.

Brilliana walked to the window, and threw it open. "Ay," she said, "I see them now—straggling companies of noisy youths and maids skipping about from house to house and making lively disport."

"Yes, yes," said old Critch, peering over her shoulder,

“there they go a-gooding and a-corning with their gossiping pot. But for my fat and stiff joints I would soon be tripping it with them.”

The girl closed the window and turned again to her companion. “Knowest thou that which I should like to do, Mother Critch?” she asked.

“Some mischief, my pet; judging from thine eye.”

“So dub it, if you will, but I would like to join the mummings, and for sweet fun’s sake go a-doling and a-singing to the neighbors’ houses. I would dress and bedeck myself as a page so that none would know me. I would take a gittern or some such instrument of melody, and I would sing love ballads to the rustic maids, and tell them I were a prince’s page from London, or a southern troubadour. What sayest thou to it, good Critch?”

“It were madcap talk were thy father to hear of it; but he is hunting to-day.”

“True, true, and that is why ’tis feasible. Wilt thou help me into my guise?”

“That much will I do for curiosity’s sake. But I warn thee that unless thou makest a good page and can enact well a lad’s part, thou shalt confine thy merry capers in the limits of thy chamber walls.”

Saying this, the old woman went out. In a moment she returned with a suit of page’s clothes. In these she speedily and deftly arrayed the Lady Brilliana. Had she been a witch and waved her potent wand over the girl’s head the transformation could not have been more effective. In the twinkling of an eye the beautiful maiden was changed into a graceful youth.

Mother Critch stood back and surveyed her handiwork. "Ha, ha, my doughty brave," she said, well pleased, "a fair young swain thou art, and every inch a high-bred page. Take longer steps: swing thy arms a little more: bite thy under lip as the mannish youths do when they would appear stern and masterful: carry thy head as a game cock: throw out thy chest—ah, that is it—mordieu! No hindrance will I put in the way of thy going forth. Thou art as good a lad as lives in merry England."

"And what shall my name be, Mother Critch? Christen your new-born son."

"Robin let it be: 'tis a fair name and short."

The page tripped around the room in ecstasy of glee. "Ay, let it be Robin," she answered; "and now I must begone. Another party of maskers has come. I hear them shouting at the gate."

In a few minutes she was a member of the rollicking crowd of guisarts. They tarried at the castle but a little while, giving and receiving trifling gifts in token of the season's good will. Then singing,

"Rise up good wife, and be no swier
To deal your bread as long's you're here:
The time will come when you'll be dead,
And neither want nor meal nor bread,"

the merry party dances down the road to the sound of drum, flute and oboe. There are youths and maidens from the village, in costumes strange and divers. Masks they wear, faces of spirits and demons; and old Nick himself is impersonated by more than one of the gay company. Like-

wise there are heads of sheep and goats, witches' faces, tails, hoofs, old helmets, pots and pans painted diabolically, smocks, cote-hardies, gaberdines and bassinets.

On they go with many a clatter and caper — a medly morris danced awry, and all seasoned with much wholesome merriment, pranks and laughter. One young swain has his head inserted in the half of a pumpkin, on the yellow poll of which is pinned a red horse's tail for hair. For mouth he has a toothed slit with set sardonic grin. Some grey goose feathers and a little treacle smeared on the cheeks made whiskers that would give a barber the falling sickness.

Ting-a-ling, clit-clat, bang! — noisily they pursue their riotous way — some score of them, — and the fair Briliana as frolicsome as any yeoman in the crowd. Now the leaders halt, and stop their rollicking song, and a shrill cry of amusement and teasing goes cutting through the frosty air. Fat and brown Polly Tots, tripping too high a measure, has stepped upon her petticoat, and as it came down and tangled in her feet, that wild youth, Guy Botten, a groom at the Priory stables, did seize it, and waive it high above his head, while he snatched the mask from blushing Polly's face; and when she jumped for the garment, did beat her back with kisses on her snub nose and chubby mouth. After a while he gives the breathless maid her mask, but flouts the skirt, pennant-like from a bean pole which he pulled up by the wayside, and improvised into flag-staff service.

As they pass through the little hamlet of Hedgedown, the villagers come to their doors and greet them with smiles and

God-speeds; the younger revellers run to the doors and knock, crying for furrnety and meath. Cross old Dame Gobblecot stands on her threshold with arms akimbo, and looks with surly disapprobation on the merry-makers. Rumor has her a witch; owls have been seen to alight on her chimney; and a big toad, fat and evil-eyed, lives under the stone of her door-step. On stormy evenings strange lights have flashed in her windows and eerie moans and wailings have been heard around her demesne.

“Ho, Mother Gobblecot!” cries that dare-devil, Guy Botten; “season’s greetings and good wishes to thee; and how dost like my banner? Is it not enow to give valor to the young men’s hearts? And hast thou stout, sack or other brew for us? so that we may drink thy health and go on our way with belly full of thy good ale and heart full of good wishes for thy welfare?”

“Pox on thy good wishes!—thou besotted mesled muck-worm—a pail of slop-water have I, which well mayest thou swill down thy impudent throat. Come but a step nearer, and thou shalt have it willy-nilly; and if not inside then outside, by my troth! It would be as honey to my soul to empty it on thy head and see thy impish eyes blinking through grease and brine, and all thy gay garnishments reeking with old victuals and kitchen liquors.”

“So surely a spirit ill becomes the season, Dame Gobblecot,” laughed the young rascal, sidling to a safer distance. “A plague on thee and thy house, and if thou hast not the ill will of St. Thomas for a twelve-month, I’ll burn tapers to the devil. We wish thee good morrow and a rollicking holiday in company with thy chummy ghouls. And ’twere

not the time of good will and security, I'd have thee weighed against the great Bible of Canterbury, or tied thumbs criss-cross to toes, and thrown into the icy Stour to prove thou art in league and contract with the devil. I'll wager thou canst not weep but three tears, and they from thy left eye; and that thou hast misplaced teats plus two, and of unnatural shape, wherewith thou dost suckle black cats and imps, nurturing them to greater evil with the vile decoctions of thy blood. A plague on thee, and the Saints preserve us from thy practices. *Virgo Maria mihi succurre, et defende ab omni maligno demonio, et ab omni maligno spiritu.*"

Out of Hedgedown the festive masqueraders danced, and on toward Guilforth Castle. The watcher at the gate sees them coming and blows his trumpet—two long blasts and one short—the signal of welcome and friendship. For all is now peace and good will throughout broad England. No stirring of enemies is feared. The sword will rust and the bow go unstrung until the joyous days are passed. Heart and house will be open; the Lord of Misrule and the spirits of genial beneficence will reign in the land.

The drawbridge is down, and the revellers pass on; "Hagmena, Hagmena, gives us cakes, cheese, good farls, and lambs-wool," they cry.

CHAPTER IV.

“ A crimson dye my face orespred,
I blusht for shame and hung my head,
To find my sex and story knowne,
When as I thought I was alone.”

— *The Lady turned to Serving-man.*

They are received in the big hall where a party of the Lord Guilforth's retainers are already making merry. Young Aylwin is there, and takes a part in the sports, or with a pleased countenance watches the others.

The hall is a vast one, with a great fireplace at each end, besides a large iron brazier in the middle. Festoons of holly and ivy sweep in graceful arches from the ceiling; while divers greenery and berries of purple and scarlet are placed about the room. The newcomers join readily in the games. With the joy of mischief, the Lady Brilliana threw herself into the merriment, and there is none more lively than she. Her clear singing and pretty dancing make her marked among the rest.

Young Aylwin sees the fair page, and notes the smoothness of his cheek, the softness of his eye, the full redness of his mouth, the bright sheen of the ringlets that steal from under his cap. Also the well-turned grace of his nether limbs.

“ By my faith! ” thinks he, “ here is a comely lad. What right has sex of mine — be he youth or no — to cheeks of pink velvet, big dove's eyes and lush red lips which are as

sorcerers' spells to craze a man? I can but love so soft and full a mouth, though it were on the Prophet Jonah. And were those eyes possessed by an asp, fain I'd be tempted (like she of Egypt) to clasp their owner to my bosom. So fair a youth must be a court page, or some great lord's young esquire. Certes, he is of noble blood. Nature could never have wrought so fair a countenance out of the coarse materials — onions, garlies and oaten cakes — on which she rears the yeomanry and villeinage. The stock that brought forth so fair a bud must needs have been nourished on rarities of vintage and gentle, well-cooked viands. Observe the contrast 'twixt him and t'others. How generations of rough ale and onions are writ upon their brows; how their forms discourse not of lightsome lance, keen swords, hawk and hound, but of plow, sickle, and heavy limbed oxen; their eyes speak submission, and their gnarled members tell tales of toil; while he, in all his bearing, would seem to manifest gentry. In his bright hair there shines the gold of princely lineage. His eyes have a flash of crown jewels. His form has been moulded by the persuasive touch of rare fabrics from Eastern looms; and the sweet pout of his ripe red lips could have been shaped and bestowed only by the breast of some high born Venus. I'll speak to him; he is a stranger in these parts; for I can swear that never have I seen his face before. Perchance, he's down from London to spend the holidays with friends or kindred. Would I could inducement give which might cause him to tarry and become a member of our household retinuc. Beauty I love, and want it 'bout me, no matter in what shape or form, the hand of God has writ it."

Aylwin becks to the fair page and takes him aside while the others make merry with games, music and a great tankard of lambs-wool which the steward has brought forth. Nor need we say that all this while many sly glances had the sweet page Robin taken towards Aylwin; and her small red heart had beat quicker than it was wont, when she saw that he observed and marked her above all others. Noted she too (nor did it serve to lessen her heart beats) that he was the same gallant she had seen on the day of the hunt — most good to look upon; that his form was a tall and pleasing harmony of well knit grace and strength; that his hair was thick and brown, and made a frame most admirable for his clear-cut face. First and last noted she his eyes—that they shone wondrously, and, when they met the glance of hers, she experienced something like a shock of strange feeling such as she could not define, yet was conscious of both a fear and a happiness.

“Sweet lad,” said Aylwin, as the blushing page came and bowed before him, ready to hear his will, — “I have observed thee and thy fair proportions and gentle graces have ta’en my eye. Points several have I cognized which would seem to denote thee a stranger here and to the major portion of this company. I did see thee either stand aloof or else with much timidity mingle in the festivities. Nor have I seen thy face before, and from thy bearing I should judge that thou wert not hand and glove with this thy company, from which thou rather differeth. Now, I would know thy name — whence thou cometh, whither goest, and at what manor art retained.”

“My Lord,” quoth Brilliana, with heart fluttering like a

wounded snipe, and a color which flickered 'twixt white and red, — “ my Lord, I am a — a — page.”

She had not prepared for any such ordeal as this. With all the gay giddiness of one of her years and sex, she had dashed into the adventure, without foresight or provision for any such emergency. Now, did this interview catch her suddenly nonplussed and alarmed.

“ Egad! and I presume so,” said her questioner. “ Bear up, my lad, be not so timorous. Even a male child in swaddling clothes should be more true to his sex than to be frightened when there is no cause for fear. Thy stature proclaims thee well in thy double numbers, — ’tis time thou knew what courage meant. So have we here another evidence of the bad consequences of these times of peace, and the mild and weakening amity of our sovereign Richard; that boys such as thou should grow up and be so unaccustomed to scenes of danger and deeds of violence that they even tremble at a stranger’s voice, and have the tender, blushing bearing of a fearsome girl. Come, come, my lad, ’twill never do! Hold up thy head and look me a fearless eye. I’m no Gorgon to devour thee, nor god to strike thee dumb. But a short space of time intervenes thee and a man’s full estate, and yet thou standest there quaking like a hounded rabbit. Come, let us learn some more. A page thou art? Very good. Now tell me whose page? ”

“ A page from London, my Lord.”

“ Odso, and whose? ”

“ Of the good Lord — Lord — Lancaster.

“ Ay, sayest thou so; now will I be a lawyer villainous and question thee closely, for methinks I scent a mystery

or a torted truth. I shall elicit the whole truth from thy pretty lips, though I have to drag it forth in grains more fine than miller's dust. So thou art my noble Lord Lancaster, his page, and how long since?"

"Full two years, sir."

"And when didst thou leave his court?"

"Yesternight, sir."

"And thou wast with him till then?"

"Yea, my Lord, right by his side, in unbroken attendance, as chief page and boy-in-waiting. I was bearer of his messages, the holder of his robes, and at the table I did wait upon him."

"Stay, I have thee in a corner, my pretty lad, nor shalt thou elude me till the truth which thou dost hold so locked fast and cautiously is yielded up to me in all its chaste virginity. Know thou, therefore, that I am intimate at my Lord Lancaster's house. Whenever I am in London his roof shelters my head. I call his house my second home. I know each page and servant of his retinue by name as well, indeed, as I do my own. Yet never have I seen thy face within his portals. To be short, boy, I tell thee plainly thou dost lie. Thy tale was plausible enow for one unacquainted with the facts; but in the matter of thy audience thou didst mistake sadly. Speak out now, for I will have it, and fear not; thy mind is too childish and too innocent for thee to work malefice. Nor am I offended at thy prankish lie. 'Tis harmless sport and mischief of the season, no doubt. Surely thy face and years bespeak no purpose dark and sinister. Thy whole bearing gives a lie to

all dissimulation. Now, my pretty boy, tell me who and what art thou?"

Lord Aylwin leaned over and took the page's hand.

The Lady Brilliana was now frightened beyond her wit's end. But one idea possessed her mind — flight — escape. She glanced into her captor's eye and then shot another look towards the door at the end of the hall. Like a terrified hart she turned and sprang away, dashed through the crowd of revelers and out the door. Down the stone steps she went at a bound. The drawbridge was down; the portcullis was up; and in a moment she had gained the highway on the heath.

Meantime a cry of "Stop thief, catch him, chase him," had been raised in the castle, and the party of merrymakers broke up in confusion. They all joined in the chase. Many, being somewhat in their cups, fell by the wayside, or staggered along, laughing uproariously and shouting, "Stop thief," at the top of their voices. Scarcely one knew just what had occurred. Various versions were set forth. Some said Lord Aylwin had been stabbed and killed by the page, and now lay weltering in blood behind the arras in the far end of the hall. Others had it that their human quarry had stolen the Guilforth coronet. Thus they surmised and straggled on across the lea, while the Lady Brilliana on the wings of terror speeded on — so light-footed, so swift that it was but a little while before a great stretch was between her and pursuers.

The Lord Aylwin after recovering from the surprise which the sudden turn of affairs had engendered, crying "Catch him, stop him," had brushed aside the jovial

rollickers and sprung to the front leading the chase. But a few paces, however, made it plain to him that owing to his surcoat, he stood no chance of coming up with the fleet-footed page. Also because of the befuddled and heedless estate of the others, he saw that the fugitive stood a most excellent opportunity of bidding them a farewell forever. Thereupon he turned and ran towards a little hill which rose on the edge of Briarvale, a short distance to his left. Reaching the crest of the hill, he placed his fingers to his lips and sent out a whistle long, shrill and piercing.

In the meadow pasture, a quarter mile away, was a drove of horses grazing and frisking around their stable. One of them raised his head and pricked his ears as the whistle came a-ringing through the cold air. He walked from the herd and stood on its edge, sniffing the air with head high as he listened yet more intent. Moslem, the Arabian stallion, had heard his master, and in another moment was speeding toward him swift as a hawk from mews.

The turf flew from his feet as the beautiful charger brought himself to a sudden standstill by his master's side. Aylwin leaped upon his back, gave him a pat on the neck, a slight knee-pressure on the side. The intelligent creature knew what was wanted and lighted out across the lea. The earth appeared to be racing under them; the wind hissed and sang shrilly in the rider's ears. As the shadow of a small cloud glides across the plain, so went Moslem. Like an arrow he shot by those of the maudlin crew who still held to the race.

Far down the road was a cluster of yews at a turning of the way. Small space elapsed before the rider wheeled around them, and then he saw the figure of the runaway,

small and distant, still running rapidly down the long stretch of road. Moslem was touched on the flank, and with a more voracious appetite he ate up the ground intervening between pursuer and pursued.

Now the fleeing one hears the rhythmic clattering of the hoofs, and looks backward, white with despair and fear. She turns abruptly to one side and makes for a thorn hedge, on the south side of which is a dense thicket of ilex. Vain hope! Another spurt of speed by the horse, and then at a word from his master, he slackens his gait as he comes up within a few yards of the page.

It must be done adroitly. A few more steps and the fugitive will gain the hedge and perchance escape. A false move of horse or rider and the boy's life and limbs are endangered. So thought Aylwin.

As gently as a swallow alighting, does the steed come up beside the runner. Aylwin reaches over and catches the fugitive in the collar of her doublet. Horse, rider and runaway are all brought to a stop. But the garment has torn, split — down the back and down the breast. It is now only held by the baldrick and sleeves. And lo, what does the young Lord Aylwin see! — a maiden's bosom — two twin snow-balls capped with strawberries — fair, lovely, but sacred, and not to be gazed upon. The panting, terror-stricken Brilliana, forgetting all else in her maiden modesty, pulls the rent bodice about her breast, and crouches down, face in hands, and bursts into tears. And there through the rent in the back of her garb gleams her soft white shoulder with its carmine brand — the wreath and fylfot — the seal of de Burleyville.

CHAPTER V.

“ Ten thousand times farewell ; — yet stay awhile ; —
Sweet, kiss me once ; sweet kisses time beguile : —
I have no power to move. How now, am I in love ? ”

— *Corydon's Farewell to Phillis.*

“ Heaven of mercy ! Alack ! — What have we here ?
What have I done ? ” murmured the Lord Aylwin, as he stood and looked down on the weeping maiden. Pale pink was such of her cheeks as he could see ; snowy her neck. Her cap had come off, releasing the great knot of twisted gold which it had held concealed. Now the long locks streamed down about her breast and shoulders as though they were sentient of the virgin's shame, and sought to help conceal what was not to be seen.

“ The daughter of de Burleyville ! ” ejaculated Aylwin, “ and blood enemy to my house.”

All the reply he got was the low sniffing of the girl. Moslem, questioning, mild, inscrutable, stood patiently regarding the twain. Save this trio, no other figures of animate life appeared on the landscape. Great clouds hung over the distant villa of Hedgedown, and seemed to be lowering their dark heads to kiss the smoke rising from the cottars' chimneys. A solitary bustard came to the edge of a copse some hundred paces off, and jumping onto a log, stood doubtful and inquisitive — took in the prospect of wintry desolateness, and returned again to his fastness.

Now, as he stood looking down upon the lone pitiable maid,



UNDER THE GREAT DRUID THEY PLIGHTED THEIR TROTH.

did a great swell of soft tender feeling rise in the heart of the young knight. He kneeled by her, nor scarce could he hold back from taking her in his arms and kissing the pink and white tear-damp little face. He felt like some great loving mother — she was his child; and he was sorry, and he knew not why; and he was glad, and he knew not why; and his heart felt all too soft and melting, for a strong brave knight; yet he could not help it.

“Sweet Lady,” he began, “sweet bud of the hated house of Burleyville, I beseech thee stay thy tears, and fear not. Sworn by the bones of my fathers and by the Cross and Blood am I to despise thy race and work it what mischief I can; yet I tell thee, damsel, that first and last, I am a knight and man, e’en before I was aught else. The strongest oath that ever was broached by God, man or devil cannot stem or change the course of blood and nature. Who swears against nature must needs perjure himself. The wrong is in the taking of such oaths, not in the breaking of them. As I am first and last a man and knight, so as a man, I love and pity thee, and as a knight, give honor and protection to thy sex.”

He stopped speaking, and regarded the sorrowful lady, who answered him not, though he noted that her sobs did lessen. So he sat silently regarding her, awaiting her speech, while his heart grew more soft, and less able became he to restrain himself that he take her not in his arms. He felt that of all places in the world was his shoulder the most suited for her head to rest upon, that he might be better able to give her comfort and soothing. Still the lady spoke not, and a great quietude lay about them, saving

that now and then the hedge sparrows chattered in the nearby bushes of hawthorne; and once a golden-crowned wren did pry at them and chirrup impertinently.

At length the Lord Aylwin, being an ardent young man, of quick blood and impulsive deed, held back no longer, but did perforce take the sorrowing maiden bodily into his arms; did kiss her hair and cheeks, and, perchance, even her lips (which, however, we do but guess at, as the only witness, the gallant Moslem, has ever been reticent as to this point).

“By the Holy Virgin!” quoth the warm youth when he betook his mouth to word instead of deed; “sweet Lady, I do love thee. I prithee be comforted. Cease thy tears, and speak to me, and fear not either for thy honor, thy freedom, or thy good name. I call the calendar of saints to witness that I love with a love which would pluck out my heart and give it to vultures ere I’ll work thee a mischief. I yield me to thy sweet will, Lady. Command, and I do thy bidding.”

The Lady Brilliana was not averse to being comforted, though, forsooth, it were in a manner most strange and new to her, she never before having known what solace to a stricken maid there was in the arm of a brave youth; nor that the lips of such an one could be turned to methods of comfort even more gracious than that of gentle words. She wiped her tears, and pushed away from Aylwin. With the quick intuition of her sex she, in an instant, knew her strength, the power of her beauty — how it could humble the haughty, turn the stony heart into liquid honey, and make the man of steel but as a column of smoke.

“Nay, nay, my Lord,” she said, a smile breaking over

her face, as bright as sunlight on a dewy meadow, — “you are o’er hasty in your avowals of love. I cannot entertain them. But now you thought me a page — a lad; and will you talk of love so soon? Fie, my Lord, you do me too much honor. I am young and know not the ways of men, but methought true love a flower of slower growth. I have heard old women say that very love buds slow and reaches not its stature in a day or night. So have they said that maidens should not heed the fervent words of men professing love; that it most oftens fortunes men are but deceivers, and their pledges as breakable as cockle shells, and all their swearings to faith as fragile as spiders’ webs.”

Then replied the Lord Aylwin: “Sweet Lady, believe it not. Old women, like old men, do give advice most sage and wholesome when the stale ashes of their young hearts lie dead and cold. I have noted that the alchemy of time doth often turn the hot waywardness of youth into the icy morality of age. Faith, I have heard it tell that such-and-such an one, who now is old, with rusty bones and creaking muscles, and so filled with divinity, healthy saws, and salubrious moralities that he cannot hear the children laugh without a frown, — I have heard that such an one, who now wraps about his austere soul the garb of spotless sanctity, and has no charity for the festivities of the young, was in his youth a king of carousers, bawd and libertine, who had more knack of dice, more tricks at cards, was the greatest alc-jack, owed more debts, and had more science of debauchery than any six Spanish sailors.

“So should thou be chary in giving belief to all that the wearied wiseacres say. Is not the loving heart of youth in

as close touch and sure communion with eternal verity as any withered hag or dour weak-limbed seer? Nor would I have thee yet so gullible that thou would'st take as gospel, and act upon all which young blood and Mother Nature bids thee to hearken. For it would seem that Nature has planted treacheries in our systems; and in our wishes and ambitions there are snares and ambuscades which we do flounder into to be striped and chastised ere we can extricate ourselves and bear from their prickly fastnesses the golden apple of experience. Therefore would I have thee weigh and winnow both the promptings of the inner self and the proffered wisdom of others. Adjust thy life to circumstance, and keep the balance, so it can be thrown hitherward and thitherward, as the time requires."

"Thou speakest words, my Lord, of deepest wisdom; I doubt it not."

"Ay, I was schooled at Oxenford in the latter part of the last Edward's reign — peace to his soul — till rife dissension 'twixt fellows from north and south did rise, and then with my preceptor — a most learned man — I took myself to Stamford, till there the king's statute broke us up, and we hied back to Oxenford. Between the times my body took active part in sports of field, I have suffered my mind to dabble much in philosophy, logic and other speculative studies. But I tell thee, maiden, never yet has there been aught interested me half so much as thou. Henceforth when I incline me to astrology, thine eyes shall be my stars of first magnitude in the heaven of thy face. The angles of my trines and quadrates shall lie between thy brows, cheek and lips. Should I incline to logic, I fain would read a syllogism

in thy face, having kisses for my premises, and more kisses for the conclusion. For my art and poetry, I'll look at thee; for my music I'll have thee speak; for theosophy and philosophy, I'd have thee put thine arms around my neck and lay thy cheek 'gainst mine. I warrant that all the learning of Plato could not give such spiritual altitude as that. What sayest thou, sweet wench?"

"My Lord, you flatter me. The honey of Hymettus is on thy tongue. As honey-laden butterflies, your sweet words fly out and must needs find a resting-place within my heart. Almost would I believe you. Still I must confess to doubt that so great passion was so shortly born."

"Doubt it not, my chuck. I have a soul of tinder — it has long been prepared — it has been waiting, knowing not its own latent capabilities. Now it has come at last — the spark, the fire — it shot from your eyes, and I knew it at once; it fell among the tinder; a tremor went through my being; and my life — my soul, burst into flame. I am consumed. There is one thing that can save me. It is you — your love. Then will the burning prove a blessing, and my soul, like the Phoenix of the myths, will arise from the flames with a new life — more grand — more glorious. I tell thee, maiden, I do love thee. Hitherto my life has been as grass, dry and dead. Now hast thou cast the torch into it. It has been as a seed which has lain in cold and darkness, dormant all winter. Now has the quickening vernal sunlight shown upon it, and it springs up into life. I pray thee, sweet damsel, let it put forth its shoots and tendrils; let it bourgeon and bloom; let it bear fruit. Do not nip it in the bud, nor permit the cold frost of thy displeasure to

settle upon it. Be thou the gentle sun, mild and beneficent, to kiss it into fuller life."

"But, my Lord, consider," said Brilliana, now a thoroughly composed mistress of the occasion, — "since love hath made thee mad, it behooves me to call back your mind to things we must not forget—to facts that shriek as hideous jackdaws, and awaken us from any pleasant dreams of romance. Remember, my Lord, the enmity 'twixt our houses. What can it avail us, though a quotidian of love do boil and posset in our souls? Marriage, sir, is out of the question. A union is impossible. In truth, did our noble sires but see us thus holding converse, sweet and amicable, our lives were not worth a Robin Hood's penny-worth. Swift as a hurtling hawk would my father's vengeance fall. It does set me all a-tremor to think upon it. The sword that seals each Burleyville would seal my doom. I beg thee assuage the rushing current of thy love, till these considerations, as carracks, sail within the harbors of thy mind, and cast their anchors."

"Dear Lady, speak not of such things to me at this time. Tell me, yea or nay, dost thou favor me?"

"My Lord, thou art a youth so noble and impetuous, thou hast taken my heart away, whether I would or no. It lies now in the keeping of thy honor. Guard it well, my Lord — 'tis a tender maiden's heart, and in it is the precious treasure of a sweet first love. Gently hold it, my Lord, 'tis thine as long as thou art worthy and willing to keep it; and when thou art not, 'twill break into a thousand tittles and be no more."

Here did the old chronicler from whom we gleaned this

tale leave a blank space in his narrative. When he bids us look again at this pair of lovers, he says that there is a deeper color on the lady's cheeks, and that her hair is more tousled, and that a softer light shines in her eyes and those of her companion. Then he goes on to say that the Lord Aylwin stepped back and raised his clenched fists toward the sky and cried: "Witness, ye heavenly sabaoth, I do love this girl, and dare all damnation that can arise of men or the world! Vows and allegiance to the blackest pit! — she shall be the queen and lady of my heart."

The lovers then did take them back to the castle. The curious questioners were soon silenced by Aylwin, he telling that the boy had done no harm, but led them a-chase only in the spirit of mad frolicsomeness consonant with the season. He had been overtaken, and just deserts of rebuke and chastisement administered him. Let no one concern themselves further, but continue their disports. Henceforth he would take it upon himself to look to the behavior of this wayward page.

And so did the Lord Aylwin. He and the Lady Brilliana, taking themselves to the great window-seat in the far end of the hall, did there seemingly engage in throwing dice, and played at such other games of hazard, the chief of which, it is needless to say, was the game of love.

So things went on till the day grew drowsy and the shadows of the hills stretched and yawned. The lusty revelers sang farewell roundelays and madrigals more boisterous than tuneful; yet 'twas intended in good part, and so received.

"My Sweet," said Aylwin, "I will walk with thee a

pace ; — let us fall behind the others, that love may have no idle audience, nor thy secret be divulged.’’

“ Be it so, dear Lord,” answered the erstwhile page, — “ suspicion lurks not in a brain that teems with wine. Our company has taken so bountifully of thy hospitable largess, that I opine they have knowledge of little, saving their own merriment. ’Tis a time when questions and concerns are fleeing to the winds, and folk busy themselves only with what appertains to jollity.’”

Coming toward the outskirts of Harbledown, while the rest of the company passed on, the lovers tarried beneath the old oak, known throughout the parish as the “ Great Druid.” Gnarled, hoary and majestically imposing was this patriarch of trees. The winds that murmured through its mossy boughs seemed to discourse and whisper secretly of old mysteries, legends and traditions. What scenes of love and bloodshed had it not looked upon. Celt, Roman, Dane, Saxon and Norman had loved and fought beneath its paternal branches. White robed Druids, bearing sickles of gold, had scaled its trunk and severed the sacred mistletoe which grew rank on its limbs. Local myth had it that the Dryad of the oak was of great good will towards lovers, and exercised a constant guardianship and supervision over the affairs of heart; that vows and compacts entered into beneath the tree were to her matters of lively interest, and their keeping she looked to most carefully. Who violated trusts thus compacted were supposed to incur her ill will, and thereby bring much hurt and mischief upon themselves.

Therefore was the “ Great Druid ” a far-famed trysting

place for lovers; and the youths and maidens of the vicinage rested not content till their vows had been interchanged within the jurisdiction of the Dryad. Of summers' nights and during the bland time of the harvest moon, this old tree witnessed many a sweet scene of pastoral passion. Locked in its great faithful oaken heart were romantic secrets of centuries, which it had kept inviolate. Once, long ages ago, on a vernal evening, when the rabbits frisked in the moonlight and the cowslips peeped up from the grass like the pale faces of tiny elves, a tragedy had been enacted under its sheltering arms. But no one knew it now—not even the starlings and magpies who built their nest among the branches and were on such intimate terms with the august tree. Grim, kindly, serene, immutable, it imparted to no one that its roots had drunk the blood of two tender young sweethearts, who met there, took a last long kiss and embrace, and died by their own wills. They thought it better so. They were young. There were obstacles, trials and sorrows in the path of their love, which their short perspective of life did not permit them to see beyond. So they sought death, that they might be together for aye. Another decade to their years and the horizon might have been wider, and they would have lived. His hand and his dagger did the work;—it was a quick stroke, and she, looking in his eyes, received it in her white bosom with a smile. Then the red point was turned to his own breast. Another quick stroke, and he flung the dripping knife out into the grass and moonlight. It shimmered and fell, startling the playing rabbits. Rolled in each other's arms then they fell over gently. Their lips clung; their hearts'

blood mingled. And the old tree sighed wearily, knowingly overhead.

Unknown to them, Aylwin and Brilliana now stood over the grave of those lovers of the past, and plighted their troth. He took a seal ring from his little finger and looked upwards. They were not quite under the mistletoe. He drew her over a little to one side and slipped the ring on her third finger. Then he turned up the face — fair and somewhat boyish, and placed a long kiss of first love on her lips.

Brilliana stepped back and sighed. “The ring slips, my Lord,” she said; “it is too large.”

“What matter, my Sweet? Our love is no thing of trinkets or jimmel rings. ’Tis spiritual, and its seal and bond is worn upon the soul. Yet hold the ring and wear it in thy bosom. The imprise which it bears — the lion and dagger of Guilforth — will thus escape thy father’s eye. Did he but see the hated emblem on thy betrothal finger, he’d crack the very skies in wrath. Wear it in thy bosom, Sweet, where it may hear the pulsing of thy heart and ever be a witness that every throb beats true for me. And if ever false note sound there, it shall gall and burn thee worse than sting of cockatrice.”

“Verily, and so may it, my Lord. I know not of love’s ways and of how maids should carry on their amours. What little I know, I gathered from ‘*Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landay*.’ But I tell thee, if ever I have a thought not true to thee, then may the eye of heaven be shut forever, and never beam again upon our fair earth. May all the legions of the fallen angels come from their dark abyſm, and

point the finger of black appeachment at me, then hurl me to their miseries."

"Well spoken, my chuck, and may St. Francis and the Dryad here help thee to keep to it. No very good reading for a lady is the book thou speakest of. One would think that Landay's two daughters were strumpets, that they had to be so advised. A monk who schooled me at Baliol College used to caution me concerning the inconsistency of maidens' hearts. As barnacles to a rock, so clung his words to my mind, and now they spawn misgivings whether I would or not, nor can I rid myself of them, though the truth in thy heart shines in thy eyes with a light I should not doubt."

"And what said your tutor, my Lord, which made such ugly impress on the spotless candor of thy mind and memory?"

"He parled much, my Heart, and seriously of maidens' wiles and deceptions; he said that pretty girls were compounded of the devil, being made of rainbows and moonbeams, winds, water, fire and will-o'-wisps; they could not be come up with; they blew hither and thither; they crazed a man and drowned his senses; they set fire to his reason; they led him a-dance; they were like wary fireflies, and made men but as a little child, chasing them."

"Terrible, my Lord! How you do affright me and cause my heat to grow heavy. But sometime it was a cork skipping and dancing on a dimpled sunlit stream of joy; now it is a stone sinking in a muddy pool of stagnant sorrow. I could die of the sullens."

“Take not on so, my Sweet, the father may have been in the wrong.”

“But was he not old and wise and good?”

“So I thought him.”

“Then you believe him, and will not love me because I am composed of vain deceits and made by the devil? And did he further say that a maiden spoke no truth?”

“He said that when hair was found on toads, teeth in the bills of hens, horns on horses, hoofs on hares, and wings on swine, then might we look for truth in maidens.”

“Oh, my Lord! — thy poniard — give it me — I will end myself. So vile a wight were better to die than live and be the devil’s iniquitous instrument.”

“Hold thee,” said Aylwin, catching her hand, “the reverend preceptor said that there was yet a heaven-sent saving salt which sometimes bided in a maid, transmogrifying all her evil propensities into properties of good and glory. ’Twas rare, he said, and few could hope to find it; yet the old seers and chronicles bear strict evidence of such a thing.”

“And that, my Lord, — what is it? Now gleams a pale hope-star across my soul’s black main. Be thy next words as those that rang o’er the primal chaos, and let this star be changed into a blazing sun which shall banish gloom, give the clouds into Iris’s custody, and transform the dark oppressive mists into radiant dews.”

“So shall it be, my Fay. The good sage said this quality of salvation was a pure unfaltering love that would suffer, brave, and die, for its beloved. Such think I that I have found in thee. So be of bright cheer. ’Tis not writ that

Satan is a salamander who can live in the hot blaze of love. I fancy that though your love shine cold as the moon, yet are the rays of mine focused so hot on thee that old Legion could work no evil in or around thee. In such a heat he would wither and shrivel as a caterpillar on the hearth. So will I not worry."

"Thus let it be, my Lord. And now I must be gone. Soon will my father call me to the evening mass, and my absence be fecund of questions."

"Another kiss, my Dove: and expect me on Christmas Eve at the gaieties in thy father's hall. Dressed as a mummer, I will come in guise of a husky strapping wife. You be a page again, and I have no dubitations but that we shall have occasion to give leash to our Cupid."

"It shall be as you say, my Lord. Adieu, adieu."

"Another kiss. Adieu, Adieu, my Life."

CHAPTER VI.

Although the cold weather doth hunger provoke,
'Tis a comfort to see how the chimneys do smoke;
Provision is making for beer, ale and wine,
For all that are ready or willing to dine;
Then haste to the kitchen for diet the chief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon minc'd-pies and roast beef.
Then well may we welcome old Christmas to town,
Who brings us good cheer, and good liquor so brown;
To pass the cold winter away with delight,
We feast it all day and we frolick all night.

— *Percy's Ballads.*

There was much ado on Christmas Eve at the great manor of de Burleyville. Friar Snicke, after much deliberation, prayer and fasting, had finally compromised with his conscience and accepted the office of Master of Merry Disports.

As atonement for the possible sin, he reserved a firm resolution to betake himself to a lone hut in Romney Marsh immediately after St. Distaff's Day, and there pass many meager days in hunger, thirst, flagellation and nakedness. So would old Nick be thwarted, did it happen that he had effected a footing in the heart or gotten a grasp on the soul of the Friar during the lax period of Yuletide.

Decked in his resplendent robes of office, the Friar now superintended the important ceremony of bringing in the Yule clog. A peaked, belled and parti-colored hood, or wimple, covered his head, the lower portion being drawn



"DRAGGING IN THE YULE LOG."

over his shoulders, so as to form a broad collar or garget. Around the neck of the hood a scarlet tippet was wrapped several times, its loose end hanging down in long streamers nearly to the wearer's heels. A tri-colored cote-hardie or jerkin, deeply dagged around its lower extremity fitted snugly the Friar's globular figure, and reached midway the thighs. A huge baldrick girt him about the zone of greatest circumference — the waist. The device on its clasp was a grinning boar's-head impaled on a fork and done in silver bas-relief. Striped trews belaced with tiny silver bells covered his fat baker-legs, serving the triple purpose of trunks, hose and leggings. On his feet were huge red crackoues, snouted and crooked up, being fastened to his knees with chains of gold and silver. A loose mantle or super-tunic completed his attire. It was red and blue, heavily embroidered, and inwrought with figures done in cloth of gold. In his right hand he held a beribboned warder; in his left, an immense kitchen fork, whose mate, the carving knife, was carried in his belt. An enormous horn, hung by a strap from the shoulder, bounced about the Friar's bulging mid-region. Its purpose was twofold, depending upon which end was raised to the lips. Stoppered it held two quarts of ale; unstoppered it could emit a blast of fearful volume.

From nearby Hentlingbraw Wood, the great log was dragged. With four draft oxen, silver cords, ribbons and bells, cymbals, oboes, cornutes, and many nimble youths and maidens, leaping and singing with much laughter — thus it came. The Friar walked majestically alongside the log, as the oxen with gilded horns and wreathed necks,

slowly dragged it along. Troops of merry children from the neighboring villakins of Ickam and Fordwich dashed back and forth in the road, or circled as a swarm of bees around the gay procession, and made much noise. Seasonable snow had fallen over night to the depth of three inches. Its ubiquitous background of immaculate white set off the scene, giving artistic tone and value to the commonplace, and bringing out objects with a pleasing vividness and intensity. Like a harmonious body-color it emmantled the landscape, as though Nature, the master artist, had during the night taken her brush and added the finishing touches to a picture of Christmas.

“ I wish you a Merry Christmas
And a happy New Year;
And a pocket full of money,
And a cellar full of beer;
And a good fat pig,
To serve you all the year.
Ladies and gentlemen set by the fire
Pity we poor boys out in the mire.”

— Sang the children.

“ Not so loud, not so loud, — you brats of Beelzebub,” chided the Friar, shaking his staff at them in affected dudgeon; “ would ye split the membrane of mine ears? As Sovereign, I would have mirth about me, but not pandemonium.”

“ Ule, Ule, Ule, Ule,
Three puddings in a pule,
Crack nuts and cry Ule.”

— They cried, not heeding him.

"It's good to cry Ule at other men's costs," growled the Friar, repeating the old proverb more to himself than to the children. Then skipping an awkward measure or so, he threw back his head, and in a voice huskily hinting of ale and hydromel, he pealed forth an abortive song whose notes sounded like the bastard offspring of discord and the influenza.

"What singest thou, Friar?" asked Carew, reeve of the manor, as the prelate came to a wheezy stop for the presumable purpose of recruiting his wind, words or tune.

"The Gloria in Excelsis, thou addled-brained ass, thou mush-headed interrupter of inspired melody and laudation. By thy fuddle-minded questioning thou hast caused me to lose the tune. My beauteous anthem will now mount to the skies all bobtailed and mutilated by reason of thy ill-timed impertinence. It will go soaring into the celestial realms like a lovely peacock without its tail, and the angels will not recognize it as coming from the dulcet chords of my humble and adoring throat. My song was cut short like that of a rising nightingale struck down by the coarse unfeeling lanaret. A plague on thee! Thou hast no more understanding nor ear for music than a Yule dough-baby."

"Pardon, Friar, I —"

"Call me not 'Friar,' lest I impale thy grinning idiot-face on my sceptre; am I not thy liege Lord, stupid clodpole? Have I not laid aside the frock and cowl and assumed regal robes of ermine? I am 'your Highness,' if it please you, and if it please you not, then will I condemn you in the drinking of six quarts of ale 'twixt now and midnight, and thence to dance jigs and capers in the main hall till daybreak."

“ I shall observe your will, my Liege.”

“ So ’twill be better for thee, my man; and hold thy tongue, for methinks I have caught the tune again. I hear it running sweet and seductive in my head, begging me give it leave to express itself to the world through the grand organ of my mouth.”

Again the Friar gave voice to a jarring dissonance, to the great amusement of the children, who caracoled and clapped their hands gleefully.

As the manor gate was neared, the din grew greater. Snow was thrown, trumpets blared, dogs barked, and the clash and clatter was terrific. The stolid oxen broke into a trot and the disorderly cavalcade scampered helter-skelter, hurry-scurry into the court-yard, the panting Friar bringing up the rear, expostulating, and singing snatches from some rude old mass, current long ere Josquin was born.

That night in the big hall there was held high carnival indeed, and jollity was rampant. The Friar rather crapulous and unsteady, from a great throne at the end of the hall, dispensed his reign, aided by the Baron, who, seated in a huge oaken chair at the feet of the monarch, acted as a sort of Lord Chancellor or Chief Justiciary, *ex officio*, to see that his Majesty’s commands were rigidly enforced and executed. Despite the show of authority, Ate came near usurping the Friar’s kingdom. But with the liberal flow of wassail, the masked mummers, the singing and playing, the roistering games and high jinks, there could be little of order. Not much did it matter, so long as the fundamental rule of government was observed;—that everyone should eat, drink, carouse and be happy.

Buxom bouncing maidens, and smiling, simpering, glassy-eyed pages staggered around, drank healths, played games of chance and forfeit, such as Spinny Wye, Shoe-the-wild-mare and Tappie-Toussie, and harried one another with lips and arms under the mistletoe. There was welcome for all, room for all. About twilight when the white face of the earth was yet softly suffused with the flush of sunset, down the paths and highways for a league round-about had come lively groups of persons. They converged at the de Burleyville castle, where they formed the vortex of merriment. Each neighboring thorpe had sent its delegation of young folk as well as its contingent of gray-heads and crooked shoulders. And though these latter bore weight of years, they bore none of heart. Well knew they all, both young and old, that the door of de Burleyville was open to each retainer of the estate on Christmas Eve, be he villein or free holder. On that blessed eve the serf met his lord on an equal plane of festivity.

They had all come; the yeoman's son with the wood-cutter's daughter; the smith with the pavior's brown-eyed lass from Canterbury; the soldier in his best buff jerkin; the weaver in his blue and white gaberdine; the mason in his white Holland shirt; — saucy damsels, callow striplings, roly-poly dames, and rustic gawky clodhoppers; also brawny men of toil and war, many wearing masks, and all in freakish or gala attire.

Early in the evening, the Yule log had been brought in with suitable rites of song and formality. Master Snicke had then selected a bevy of pretty girls to cast lot for the honor of lighting it. Clemency Joyce, the tanner's hazel-

eyed, saucy-faced bud of sixteen, was the lucky one. The remnant brand of last year's clog was ceremoniously brought forth on a silver platter by two pages and laid in the Friar's lap.

"Ho, there, silence! — all my subjects," said Master Snicke, rising with considerable difficulty, and rapping loudly with his fork on the pewter beaker he had just drained. "Wash thy hands well, my pretty maid, and then come and let me inspect thee, and receive the sacred chunk from the hands of thy king."

The damsel washed her hands, went forward, and kneeled at the Friar's feet.

"Let me see thy hands that they be clean," he said.

She held out her hands; the Friar took them in his and raised her up.

"Spotless as snow, and now do I seal thy lips. Speak no word till the new log is lighted."

He kissed the girl's lips — a longer osculation than the function demanded — and then with much mock solemnity, delivered the piece of charred wood into her hands. There was silence, save here and there in the crowd was a shuffling of feet of those over-balanced with ale, also some whisperings and suppressed sniggles of the irrepressible young.

The Friar frowned and rapped again, staggered, and sat down, with a brave attempt at dignity. The crowd parted, and the maiden with bowed head passed down to the great fireplace. There she carefully placed the brand upon its bed of crisp dry rosemary, holly, and bay, under the immense new log. Over all she threw some seasoned slivers from a shrew ash, and then applied a candle to the

pile. The bright flames rushed up with a crackle and hiss, and encircled the log. The crash of drums and trumpets and a loud cheer broke from the waiting assembly. The heavy tapestries swayed to and fro and the oaken rafters in the high ceiling shook with the joyous clamor. Christmas was begun in earnest.

It was the custom for the maid who lighted the Yule log to preside with the Lord of Revelries as Queen of the evening. The Friar delegated a page to escort the radiant Clemency to his throne, where, taking her by the hand, he seated her on his right and placed a wreath of bay and mistletoe on her head. Then the courtiers and servitors of his retinue, and all others who so desired, came forward and did her homage, kneeling before her and kissing her hand, while the crowd sang: —

“Reign, Queen of Christmas, reign, ho-hay!
Till we with mirth and mead are fay;
We are thy men, and if we fail
To eat thy brawn and drink thy ale,
Then throw us i' the robbers' gaol.

Reign, Queen of Christmas, reign ho-hie!
While love and laughter caper by,
Let black-jacks pass and song abide,
While serve we willing, at thy side —
Our blessed Queen of blithe Yuletide! ”

Higher and higher ran the flood of merriment. Strong beer was broached and the black jacks went plentifully around with toast, sugar, cakes, nutmeg and cheese. Towards midnight, the party began to break up, — some going to hunt the wren, and others to midnight mass.

Among those that remained were a group of young persons gathered around the Friar's throne, being mainly composed of pages and maids-in-waiting, attendant upon the royal pair. This party, under the supervision of the Friar and the Baron, for some time past had been engaged in merry games of skill and forfeit. The Baron beamed benevolently on the players, but, strict in everything, he saw to it that the games were played fairly to all and that the rules were rigidly complied with. Notable among the players were a fair rosy-cheeked page wearing a half mask, and a tall angular young woman, who towered above the other members of her sex, and had every appearance of a rustic dairy-maid.

Amid the general hubbub these two persons had attracted more than passing notice because of the evident beauty and grace of one and the uncouthness of the other. The page, having taken the eye of the Friar early in the evening, had given his name as Poynes Verney, and was appointed chief page for the night. So had the rollicking Queen Clemency, in a spirit of fun, selected Gramudgin, the gawky milk-maid, as her maid of honor. Such distinction had brought the twain into still more prominence, and there had been bred some curiosity as to their real identity. They had been the butt of many jests and gibes, and it became a great joke to bedub them lovers and twit them with accusations of a mutual passion for one another. The jesters cast their fates with cards, and saw that the paths of their fortune ran together in Hymen's court. This badinage had been aggravated by a seeming pleasure which Poynes and Gramudgin found in each other's society. It having been decreed that they should kiss as the forfeit of a cer-

tain game in which they were losers, it was observed that they did it lingeringly and with little show of reluctance. Great was the shout of laughter that had greeted this spectacle, when the ungainly and grotesque Gramudgin bent over the tip-toeing Poynes till their lips met.

Thus the hours flew by. "What disport next?" your Highness," said Poynes, bowing before the Friar, at the conclusion of a game — "what game will it please our sovereign Liege now to behold? Ordain, my Lord, the next festivity for thy happy subjects to engage in, that there be no tristful spirit in all thy realm, and that our jollity may be as sweet chrism to thy soul. I come as the emissary of thy people to announce that the most honorable and highly delectable game of Thread-my-needle is concluded, and thy loyal subjects do now clamor for a new decree and mandate from thy serene Bountifulness, as to what further sport they shall pursue in order that their king and the season shall be fitly honored and glorified."

"So-ho, Sir Page — let us see — another cup of furmety — good! — it drives the spur into jaded memory and makes it as an unbroken stallion. It gives a fillip to nature. So many edicts have we issued this evening that our store runs short. Have the waits and pipers sung the roundelays of Gisla and Rotrude?"

"Ay, my Lord."

"Another cup, Sir Page. Good! — And the virelays of the Sieur de Ribeauumont, — hast the harper given us them?"

"Early in the eve, my Liege."

"My memory grows laggard — a little hippocras, Sir

Page — the moiety of a cup. 'Gainst thou fetchest it, I will bethink me — ah, excellent! sweet page, — thou hast it so soon? 'Tis well flavored, but a little o'er strong of spice. Howsoever, our recollections and intellect are quickened. There's nothing like a temperate touch of the genial cup, my lad, for bringing out the best of one's wits; but only the wise and cautious know how to use it well, fair youth; and I would admonish thee to be temperate, my lad; thou art yet unseasoned, and ale to the unripe mind is like too much rain on the hops or too much strong leaven in the dough. My character is of such hardened holiness that the little piccadillos of the flesh rebound from it without doing it a mischief."

"Ay, my Lord, your words are as heavy with wisdom as is your regal breath with grog. But know, my Liege, that thy humble subjects do wait impatient for the next decree."

"Then let them wait, thou paynim, thou jobbernole — let them wait and hear wisdom while we are in the frame of mind to dispense it. Let us flavor their giddiness with words of well-timed discretion. Our Pierian Spring does not flow with uninterrupted course, but spouts intermittent. When the fount is at its height, let all the people, no matter what the time or occasion, hark with hungry ears, lest they lose some word of erudition. Dost hear?"

"Yea, your Highness, each word makes indelible impress on my mind. Thou art a second Solomon, as well as Christmas King."

"Well spoken, thou cunning tyke, — so am I — now let us see — were we not discoursing on the beauties of temperance? and distilling learned maxims thereupon?"

“ It is so, O, King.”

“ Then we will continue to conclusion. Bear this in mind ;—the first cup, my boy, sharpens the wits ; the second loosens the tongue ; the third gives pugnacity ; the fourth loosens the morals ; the fifth befuddles, and the sixth puts a man in the sty. Thus with man. With woman, let her first cup be labeled, silly ; her second, amorous ; the third, brazen ; the fourth, reckless ; and her fifth, —let it bear nothing at all, but be blank. Dost follow me ? Bear in mind, young man, that I learned these things not through experience, but by observation, reading and reflection : I am a spiritual physician ; he who cures must know the habits of his patient, the structure of his body and the effects and nature of the malady.”

“ Yea, resplendent Above-all ; but thy impatient servitors — ”

“ So, so, — I forgot me. Now will I turn the spigot on my fount of wisdom lest the floods of intellect drown those who come to drink. I think I have it, — Questions and Answers — have my vassals played that ? ”

“ No, serene Exaltation.”

“ Then let it be. We ourselves will propound the interrogatories. Gather the company round about our throne.”

CHAPTER VII.

“ My Phillida, adieu love!
Forever more farewell!
Ay me! I've lost my true love,
And thus I ring her knell.”

—*Corydon's Doleful Knell.*

“ Be still now,” commanded the Friar, when the spright-some young people were collected about him and the Baron. As luck would have it, he then singled out the awkward Gramudgin for the first to be questioned, and bade her come forth from the ranks and stand in the middle of the circle.

“ For the benefit of those who know not, I announce that the rules of this ancient and excellent diversion are thus,”—continued the Friar,—“ whatever is asked must be answered truly and properly, and our Queen shall be the judge as to whether 'tis so done. If she deems any answer insufficient in any manner, then shall she fix the penalty that shall be meted out to the culprit, and it shall be the bounden duty of all others to see that the penalty is enforced. If any consider them aggrieved by the punishment they receive, they may appeal to our loyal subject, the Baron, who shall pass upon the equity of the Queen's decree.”

The crowd clapped their hands right nimbly, showing that they heeded and approved the monarch's words. When the noise was stilled, the Friar, pointing his finger at Gramudgin, went on:—

“Now, my gentle lass, tell me thy real name.”

“Gramudgin Giles, my Liege,” the young woman responded hoarsely.

“Thy voice is like a rusty weather-cock — art thou male or female?”

“Female, my lord.”

The Friar turned to his queen: “What says our royal partner — do the answers suffice?”

“Nay, nay,” the Queen replied, — “her voice, her height and her hips do give her the lie. Therefore do I command that the mask and hood be torn from her face.”

The condemned one appealed to the Baron, but her plea was overruled. She then made a furious attempt to dash through the surrounding hedge of players; but was seized and dragged back. There was a fierce, violent struggle. The ungainly young creature was finally overpowered, thrown down at the feet of the Baron, and the mask and wimple were torn off.

For a moment those immediately around the prostrate figure stand aghast. Then they back off, and a sudden and ominous silence falls on the company. The Baron looks down. It is young Aylwin Guilforth who lies at his feet. There, embroidered on the now exposed bosom of his tunic are the hated arms and insignia of Guilforth; and on his neck is a heavy gold chain bearing a seal that is engraved with the crest of the despised house.

The Baron with a violent motion draws his dagger half from its sheath, and then clutches its handle, squeezing it spasmodically till the great nails on his fingers flush red and purple.

Back, back — still further the mummers go till they stop in a quadrangle next the walls, many of them trembling beneath their masks and gowns. The chief page Poynes remains standing solitary before the Baron. He seems so overcome with fright as to lose all power of movement. His knees shake so that the jingles on the tamborine he carried rattle metallicly.

But the Baron does not notice him. His fierce blue eyes, black now with rage, stare into the face of Sir Aylwin.

That unfortunate youth rises slowly and stands before the Baron, pale but unflinching. His lips, usually so full and red and ever ready to smile, are now compressed and firm. His dark hair has become dishevelled by the scuffle and is thrown about his head in wanton picturesqueness. His big dark eyes unwinkingly return the Baron's terrible glare. A light seems to be kindling in them — a gleam, fierce and subtle, reflected perhaps from his soul. It envelops the accustomed softness of his eyes, and shines cold and intrepid like the reflection of blue steel on a frosty morn.

The Baron breaks forth — his voice hoarse and broken with rage: —

“ Dog of a spy! sneaking spew of a cur! — how darest thou? How darest thou to thus make the sacred festivities a covert for thy base villainies? God! — and 'twere not the holy time, I'd cleave thee as thou standest. Thou art a worthy scion of thy dishonored line, thou cursed asp. To think that thou hast drunk and eaten in mine house! My knife doth so famish for thy blood, 'twere not a marvel if of its own accord it leapt from its sheath and slacked its thirst at the foul fountains of thy heart. And drink it shall, too, my pretty

one — ha, ha,— when the time is ripe ; but I'll forbear me now, and abide the fitting hour, while each passing day shall see my passion for thy blood grow and swell to frenzy. I will spare thee till the holy days are gone. It were a crime against high Heaven to spill the vile fluid of thy veins during Christmas, and so taint the pure air of the gracious time.

“ Meantime I'll not rebuke thee more. Thrice welcome thou art, my Christmas gift. By the Rood, I am a-favored of St. Nicholas! that he bringest me so rich a boon. For such have I prayed and done much penance.”

The Baron laughed sardonically. He called his guardsmen and had them put young Guilforth in the deepest of his dungeons and secured with the strongest of shackles. He then turned his attention to the page Poynes, who had sunk on the floor.

“ That boy,” he said, addressing some of his attendants, “ lies in a drunken fit. Unmask him, wake him up and bring him before our Lord, the Friar, that he may receive word of admonition and deserved reprimand. If he must needs sleep off his ale, let him to bed. We cannot have our presence a dormitory for sots.”

The attendants went and shook the page ; they pulled him up and brought him before the throne, where they took off his mask.

The crowd fell back again and the Baron sprang to his feet. “ Now, may Heaven save my soul ! ” he exclaimed, with what little breath was left him, as he beheld the face of his daughter Brilliana.

She stood there unsteadily before them all, white and

half swooning. Tears had started into her eyes, but their flow was arrested by terror, and they got no further than her lashes and lids, where they now hung heavily and sparkled in the light of the torches and candles. Palely beautiful, she hung her head and seemed as a rare and delicate flower when it feels a sudden descent of an Arctic blast. They all understood now — the grace of the page, the soft roundness of his limbs, and the exquisite witchery of his form and movement. Even above her terror, the modesty and shame of the lady because of her costume could easily be discerned. And so it was that her male attire did not lessen one whit her beauty, but rather made it greater; for there was no boldness about her at all, and the tragedy of her dilemma and the martyrdom of her aspect made each beholder feel like the unfortunate Actæon when he unwittingly walked into the grotto of the bathing Dian.

The Baron waved his hand and ordered every one to leave the hall. When they were all gone, he took Brilliana's hand and sat her beside him.

"Daughter, cease thy trembling, and tell me what this means. Did I not see thee kiss that Guilforth dog?"

"Yes, my sire."

"Didst thou know 'twas he?"

"Ay, my Lord."

The Baron seized her by the arm and looked into her eyes. His other hand grasped the hilt of his dagger.

"What sayest thou, damsel?" he hissed, "Did I hear aright?"

A deep color had come into the girl's cheeks, and her

eyes flashed as she answered: "You did, my Lord: I love young Aylwin Guilforth."

The Baron whipped out his dagger and flung it violently into the fireplace at the far end of the hall. It struck into the Yule log, and quivered, throwing off showers of little sparks.

"Tempt me not," said the angry peer, springing from his daughter's side,—"I have a temper of wild lions—thou art my very soul,—yet in the rage of duty, I could carve thee as a capon."

He seized a horn and blew a blast. In a moment several men-at-arms entered. He pointed to his daughter; "Take her to the topmost tower—double lock the door, and bring me the key. Damnation is abroad. The devil is loose. Treason and treachery are hatched in my very house!"

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Though mountains meet not, lovers may;
What other lovers do, did they;
The God of Love sate on a tree,
And laught that pleasant sight to see.”

— *Cupid's Pastime.*

Alone in her prison turret-room the sad Lady Brilliana sat and brooded through the long hours of Christmas Day's forenoon. It was a southern tower of the castle, and towards midday the sun peeped bright and cheery through the windows, adding much to the comfort of the chamber; for the turf in the brazier had been smouldering so lazily that the frosty outside air made bold to enter.

Once the lady arose from her couch, took the poker, stirred the fire coals, and then settled herself in the window-seat. Sad, dreamy and half-tearful were the big blue eyes that gazed from the latticed window over the snowy heaths and hills of Kent. The sunlight poured in through the casement and glittered on the effulgent splendor of her hair. Some color had left her cheeks since yesternight, and the mouth of maddening mischievous smiles was more tristful. Her dimples — those whirlpools of love and beauty in which Cupid himself seemed to gyrate, and infect all who looked on him with his contagious giddiness, — reposed now in unusual abeyance. In the twinkling of an eye the troubles of first young love had smitten the maiden, and with the miracle of conscious womanhood, had wrought other trans-



THRUST ITS HILT INTO THE COALS.

formations in her. A world of seriousness, tender and sweet, now lay in her expression, and in her wistful eyes were wonderful shades and depths of meaning never there before.

She took out her lover's ring, warm from contact with her bosom, and looked at it long and tenderly, then raised it to her lips and kissed it repeatedly.

Sighing, she again raised her eyes and looked across the moorland, pensive and melancholy. Towards the end of the heath she saw the purple lines of the hawthorne and briar hedges stretching across the fields like frayed ribbons marking the allotments of the tenants; the straw-thatched dovecote with the bustling pigeons on the roof, ruffling their feathers and quarreling as they sunned themselves; and just in the courtyard was a platform on which were the pillory, the cucking-stool, and stocks. All these things she saw as one in a dream, but thought not of them.

Earlier in the morning her father had visited her, and she had begged him to spare her lover's life, telling him the story of their meeting and of the birth of their love. "By the Sepulchre! I tell thee, he shall die," the Baron replied angrily; "The morn after Twelfth Night he shall die. Wouldst thou have me false to mine vows and honor? He shall die, child, he shall surely die. I will do my duty though the sun be snuffed out like a candle and the stars drop hissing into the sea. Thou knowest thou art the only fountain in the desert of my life; the only flame that flickers on the cold hearth of my heart; the one cherished flower that has rooted itself in the rocky confines of my soul. Yet I place allegiance to my honor and oaths even above my love

for thee. Do not persist in thy foolishness lest thou anger me to rash things. Thou art possessed of a devil. Pray God to deliver thee from the evil spirit which incites in thy heart this passion for a cursed Guilforth."

He then told her that Mother Critch would have access to her room, and would bring her bodily sustenance; and with a parting admonishment to discretion and steadfast prayer, he had left her.

"Hi-ho, my sweet, why so sorrowful?" said a merry voice suddenly breaking in on the Lady Brilliana's reverie. She looked in the direction whence the voice came, and saw a long nose and merry eye peeping through the draperies that hung over the door. "One would think thou wert the only maid who had ever loved, ha, ha! Not so wofully, my chuck, — not so wofully."

The tapestries parted, and Mother Critch, bearing a trencher on which were wine, oaten cakes and capon, entered the room. Placing the tray on the window-seat, she went to the brazier and jostled the coals vigorously.

"By the Dun Cow of Dunsmere!" she exclaimed, "'tis cold quarters you keep for hot young love. Knowest thou not, he is but a naked boy without hood or mantle and is like to freeze?"

"Nay, Mother Critch, he may die, but never freeze. I will keep him in my warm red heart."

"Thou hast none, my Lady — thou hast no heart. No maid with a heart ever gazed out of a window so dreamily as I saw thee doing but now. Fie! fie! Mother Critch is no fool. She was young once too, and had eyes that saw

not and ears that heard not. Your Ladyship must drink the wine and keep the blood in thy cheeks."

"To what purpose, Mother Critch?"

"Forsooth! — kisses; — to what other purpose should a girl's cheeks be kept rosy and dimpled? Kisses — lovers' kisses — you would not have your champion kiss a mere ghost?"

The Lady Brilliana made no reply, but only sighed and looked out of the window again. The old woman came and stood before her, a sudden tenderness softening the hard lines of her face.

Brilliana turned and regarded her with a pitiful little smile. "Drink," said the crone, pointing to the cup of wine. The girl did as she was bidden. Mother Critch then took her hand.

"My child," she said, "you were suckled at this breast — the only girl babe that ever was; when you were a child it was your place of refuge and comfort in time of trouble; you laid your head there and spoke your sorrows in mine ear. You are a child again now, and the old place, the old comfort is here."

She paused as she saw by the trembling of the maiden's lips that the storm of anguish was about to break. In another moment the girl had thrown her arms around the old woman's neck and was weeping on her breast. Mother Critch mumbled some words of solace; and in a little while the Lady Brilliana was smiling and cheerily relating every incident of her brief amour.

Mother Critch tarried long, and the two held a lengthy consultation in low tones. As she left she put her skinny

finger on her mouth, and nodded gravely — wisely. Already she saw that a new light had come upon the Lady Brilliana's face; that there were bright tears of joy in her eyes; and that those eyes now shone as two stars of hope. The kindly old soul shed a hard tear herself as she locked the doors and went on her way.

That night after the Lord Aylwin had long been asleep in his dark, damp dungeon, he was awakened by the rattle of the rusty locks of his prison door. He started up thinking that his time had come; he clutched the crucifix on his breast, and muttered a hasty prayer.

The door swung open and the glare of a torch flashed in. In the dim smoky light, he saw three figures. The bearer of the light, an armed man, preceded and entered the room; behind him appeared the shadowy forms of two women.

“My sweet Lord Aylwin,” said a gentle voice.

The speaker came into the light, and the young Lord beheld the Lady Brilliana.

She was arrayed all in white, and her hair was loosened and streamed down her shoulders in resplendent floods of scintillating gold. The light glimmered on her pink and white face: excitement, timidity, emotion — were all there, and each seemed lending additional charm to her beauty. Clutched to her breast, and holding it with both her small hands, she carried the great sword of de Burleyville. Aylwin thought he dreamed. He put up his hands to his forehead and stared spellbound at what he believed to be a vision.

“Beauteous angel,” he murmured like one in deep sleep might do: “what does it mean? Why comest thou,

lovely apparition, thus to me in mine slumber? Hast thy father slain thee, and thou bringest me his sword wet with thy blood? Speak and expound me the meaning of thy beatific visitation?"

"Wake up, man, and cease thy drivelling," muttered a cracked voice. And Mother Critch shook the knight by the shoulder, while her burly son, Crowgill, paused and held the torch aloft. "Gather thy wits, quickly — we have come to save thee. Here is thy love, — greet her like a man and not like a halting, stuttering craven."

Sir Aylwin needed no further words. Forgetting all save Brilliana, he sprang up and rushed towards her. He got but a few feet when the chains on his ankles jerked him back, and he tumbled headlong into the girl's arms. Both fell; and both rose to their knees.

"Ahem!" said Mother Critch, after a considerable length of time.

All was still again.

"Ahem — ahem!" she repeated louder.

Nobody heeded; but the motionless Crowgill caught her eye, and grinned grimly.

The old crone grew impatient, "That'll do — that'll do, my doves," she scolded, as she turned to a brazier which she had brought in with her, and shook its glowing coals fractiously. "That's long enough, even for hungry young hearts. They'd keep at that till doomsday if we let them. Brilliana, remember there is work to be done elsewhere than in the Seventh Heaven. Turn about. Pick up the sword and heat the seal. Master Aylwin, bare thy shoulder and prepare to come into the de Burleyville fold."

Brilliana parted from her lover, picked up the sword and thrust its hilt into the burning coals of the brazier.

“What does all this mean?” asked Aylwin, surprisedly regarding the strange proceedings.

“It means that thou must be branded with the seal of de Burleyville if thou wouldst have the faintest hope to keep thy life and win thy bride,” answered old Critch.

“Why that? Why may we not flee together? I will take her to our stronghold in the North and defy the Baron.”

“Not while I live,” put in Crowgill, closing the door and locking it on the inside. “I will not violate my allegiance to my master by being a party to thy escape — I, who am the trusted gaoler. But I see no breaking of my pledges to faith in suffering a Burleyville to brand thee with the seal.”

“So let it be, then,” joyfully consented Sir Aylwin.

He then proceeded to unfasten his doublet from about his neck, taking out one arm from its sleeve till his firm bare shoulder stood out in the light as white as marble.

Meantime the Lady Brilliana was heating the sword and looking sorrowful, as she thought of the pain she must needs cause her beloved one. Serious were her eyes, while she watched the seal grow hot. Mother Critch produced a bellows and blew the coals into a roaring ruddy glow. The anxious maiden then saw the hilt grow red as the embers. She looked towards her lover.

“Art ready, my Heart,” she asked.

“I await thee, my Soul,” he answered.

She took up the sword and held it in both hands, per-

pendicularly, and ran to him. A tear fell from her eye and hit sputtering on the hot iron. One moment she laid the weapon down on the floor while she stooped over, put her arm around her lover's neck, and kissed the spot she was to sear.

Then she jerked up the blade. There was a hissing, stewing sound — a savor of burnt flesh; and the girl flung down the sword with a clatter.

CHAPTER IX.

Joy, gentle friends, Joy,
And fresh days of love accompany your hearts."

— *Shakespeare.*

The morn succeeding Twelfth Night was dark and gloomy. Great murky snow clouds sprawled heavily over the sky, and intermittent unfriendly winds sang gloomily across the moors, or howled depressingly around human habitations. The smoke came cowering from the chimneys, wavered an instant, and then, caught in the bold arms of the ravishing blast, it was torn asunder and whirled hither and thither in attenuous and ever-lessening wraiths of blue and brown.

The Baron arose early and with a merry heart. He sang a bloodthirsty old war song as he dressed himself in his finest raiment; he breakfasted most heartily, and then sat him down to await the hour of noon, which he had set for the execution.

"Ha, ha," he chuckled, in his heart's depth, — "this day sees the fulfilment of my dearest wish; it means the final triumph of de Burleyville and the ultimate extinction of the race of Guilforth dogs. The caitiff that I kill to-day is the last scion of the house, and his death will mean his father's also."

Thus meditating, it presently occurred to the nobleman that there was a strong probability of the parent Guilforth making a speedy and desperate attempt to save his son. In fact rumors to that effect had not been lacking, and he

had heard that battering rams and other infernal engines were making in the Guilforth premises. Now that the sacred days were over, he doubted not that an attack might be made at any moment.

Therefore, the uncertainty of all mundane things being considered, he thought it best to have the prisoner beheaded at once, and not delay the matter an unnecessary instant.

He summoned the faithful Crowgill, and bade him bring out the captive and proceed at once with the execution; that the friends he had invited to witness it at noon would no doubt be disappointed, but they could hold a high feast and carnival with him anyhow, and view with pleasure the head and limbs of the victim on the high points of his castle.

While Crowgill went to fetch the doomed one, the Baron ascended to his daughter's room. Arm-in-arm with her he purposed witnessing the death.

"Come forth, my sweet," he said to her, in blithe glad tones, — "the hour of divine judgment and justice is here. With me thou must now behold the triumph and exaltation of our blood. The falling of the wretch's head shall also mean the end of thy imprisonment."

The Lady Brilliana, though serious, bore herself with becoming fortitude. This did not escape the Baron, who observed; "Right thankful am I to see the good effects of thy prayers, that thou bearest thyself so bravely. I doubt not the devil of thy insane love has been cast out. I paid the good Friar Snicke ten marks to pray for thee, and bade him exert his powers in exorcising the demon."

The Lady Brilliana smiled weakly, but said nothing.

Leaning on her father's arm, she descended the winding stair of the tower and went forth into the courtyard.

The news had spread like wildfire that the execution would be expedited. Already the enclosure was filled with the retainers of the estate, both male and female. There were also many others from the vicinage, who had come early for purposes of idle curiosity.

Around the execution block, the sight-seers stood thick and expectant — all with different emotions showing in their faces. Some had eagerness of blood in their eye; others looked a trifle fearful. Unfeeling little urchins plowed their way to the front ranks, gibbering and jesting, and making prophecies concerning the details of the coming event. Old warriors, stolid and stoical, stood grimly by, silent and immobile. Shrivelled and watery-eyed old women, their wizened features half concealed in tattered mufflers, shuffled around, chattering and croaking. Young girls hung together in groups, now talking in low voices, now tittering, and sometimes breaking out in high trebles of mirth.

At last there was a commotion in that part of the crowd next to the castle door. Men and women were pushed aside, stern voices spoke in low tones. The crowd wavered and opened. Eight soldiers came marching into the arena. In their midst walked Sir Aylwin, Friar Snicke, and Crowgill, the executioner. The young Lord's hands were securely bound, but he carried a high proud head, and his eye was clear, fearless and masterful as an eagle's. Friar Snicke, heavily loaded with rosaries and a great Bible, walked by his side and mumbled words of comfort and encourage-

ment in his ear. Crowgill followed, carrying a heavy keen-edged broadaxe.

The Baron raised his hand and made the crowd stand back. Then he led the Lady Brilliana close to the block, where the two took their stand as the captive was brought up and the guardsmen stationed themselves roundabout.

Crowgill took some hasty low-toned orders from the Baron. He caused the unresisting prisoner to kneel before the block, and commenced to unlace the doublet from his neck in order that his axe might have unimpeded sweep. In these final offices, the Friar assisted, still muttering words of sustaining hope and cheer. They pulled the garment down from the young knight's neck.

Lady Brilliana bent forward and watched their every movement. Her lips were parted; her eyes strained and intense.

Further still, Crowgill slipped the garment, till the left shoulder of Sir Aylwin was exposed. And there on his fair skin, like rubies inlaid in marble, appeared the seal of de Burleyville.

Brilliana saw it, and clutched her hands in a full-souled prayer of thanks to Heaven.

The Baron saw it not.

"Strike!" he thundered. "Why that dalliance?"

"My Lord,—" began Crowgill.

"Strike," commanded the Baron, not hearing him.

The man still demurred. The Friar, having recovered a little breath, approached the Baron and pointed to Aylwin's shoulder.

The peer, now thoroughly enraged at the delay, saw

nothing and heard nothing. He sprang forward, snatched the axe from the headsman's hands, and before any could stop him, swung it aloft over the captive's head, and brought it down with a furious stroke.

Simultaneously a great noise arose outside the walls, and a thick shower of arrows fell among the people. Another moment, and the gates were battered down, while with a great shout the forces of Guilforth swarmed in.

The Baron de Burleyville was standing motionless over the body of his victim, on whom he now beheld the seal. The axe dropped from his nerveless fingers; he placed his hand on his heart, and with a face white as death, he turned to his daughter.

Struggling to reach the body of her lover, she staggered by her father. An arrow, which Heaven in its mercy had guided, protruded from her breast. She reached her lover's body and fell gently over.



"HIT'S JES LIKE I TELL YOU."

UNCLE BILLY'S ADVICE.

Major Owen had gone to pay his devoirs to the widow Weatherford, and Aunt Sally and Uncle Billy were in his kitchen, discussing, like every one else just then, the relations existing between the widow and the Major. Every one was anxious for the match, and did all they could to bring it about. The Major was a prosperous bachelor of fifty — the widow, like most widows, was of uncertain age, but fresh-looking and spry. She was evidently on the carpet again, and the Major had little competition, as beaux were scarce in the neighborhood.

Yet no one could see how it would ever come to pass; for their natures were diametrically opposed. Sentiment was the dominant element in Mrs. Weatherford, while the Major was all prose and utilitarianism. He had never been known to evince the smallest spark of sentiment. The widow was fond of poetry, painting, nature, and romance; the Major never seemed to have a thought for anything but the prosy details of agriculture, stock-raising, and such practical matter-of-fact things.

“Yas,” Uncle Billy was saying, “I wants to see um merried — I likes um bofe — de Majer is my Boss, an’ I wants ’im ter git er good wife.”

“Yas,” answered Aunt Sally, “I wish dey’d git mer-

ried, too: dey's mighty well suited to one an'er in some ways. De Majer he's well-to-do an' wants er wife, an' Miss Helen she's good lookin' an' wants er husband: hit looks like dey ought to come togedder; but I feard dey is gwi' hang fire. Dey don't seem to coperate, somehow — hit looks like dere cunst'utions is difunt."

"Naw, Sis Sally, I don' see how dey is ever gwine ter be brought tergedder," Uncle Billy continued, "— dey don't seem to be leastwise kumpatibil: dere tempertures don't seem to be er tall harmonical.

"When I drove um f'om chuch las', Sunday, dey was bofe settin' tergedder on de back seat uv de kerridge, an' I could hear mighty plain every word dey say, an' I see den how matters was. Miss Helen she try to talk 'bout books an' po'try an' flowers an' sech things, an' de Majer he turn 'er off on 'tatoes an' pigs an' peas an' sech like.

"We passed er patch uv clover in full bloom, an' Miss Helen say — 'O what beautiful clover! — how sweet an' fragrint it is! — isn't it lovely Majer? What is it dat de poet says 'bout de bees on de clover?'

"Den de Major he kinder grunt an' 'spon' back an' says he don' know what no poet says 'bout it, but he know dat clover is ripe an' ought ter be cut. Den he goes on an' tells 'er 'bout his 'sperience wid clover — 'bout how it gin de slobbers to his fine mare 'cause he fed it to her las' year when 'twas in bloom. He talked clover an' he talked clover: he talked 'bout clover wet, an' he talk 'bout clover dry; 'bout good clover an' po' clover; 'bout his clover an' all de' neighbor's clover. He talk clover till — Gawd knows — hit mos' put even me to sleep. Miss Helen she

sot dere endurin' uv it like — sayin' 'yas' an' 'no' in er kinder fur-away viece.

“Arter while when he git thu wid clover, he started on timothy an' millet, an' he come on down thu oats an' rye — on thu corn an' wheat till he hit on wire-grass. I lay back den 'ginst de side uv de kerridge to take er nap, 'cause I knowed wire-grass was his fav'rite subjie'. Yas Lawd, — I knowd when he got on wire-grass couldin nothin' less dan de smash up an' tu'n over uv de kerridge stop 'im; so I lay back an' let 'im rip. 'Twas er warm day an' we had right smart ways to go: de hosses was gwine slow, an' I dozed an' nodded clean till dey stopped at de front gate an' I tumbled off de seat. I picked myself up an' jumped out to open de gate. De Majer was still talkin' wire-grass. Miss Helen looked kinder faint like she jes come thu er spell o' sickness, but de Majer kep' ginnin' er wire-grass — nothin' but wire-grass. Lawd! — he gin dat 'oman wire-grass 'nough to kill 'er. How kin er man 'spec' er 'oman to have 'im when he do like dat? If he jes' hader gin 'er a little v'ri'ty — if he jes' hader throwed in er little pusly, or sheepmint, or peppergrass, it wouldner been ha'f as bad. Po' Miss Helen, she mus' dreamed 'bout wire-grass dat night — sho.”

“Well,” said Aunt Sally, “I can't see what she want to go wid 'im fur if dat way he do 'er. If Jim Thomas hadn't talk ter me 'bout suppin' 'sides wire-grass he never woulder merried me — naw my Gawd!”

“En if he was to start it now you'd mighty soon be er grass widow, wouldn't you?” asked Uncle Billy, grinning at his own facetiousness, which Aunt Sally, however, took seriously.

“I’d mighty soon break ’im uv it,” she fired back, her anger rising at the mere thought of such a thing.

“Well, to tell the trufe,” continued Uncle Billy, I b’lieve Miss Helen likes de Majer tol’ble well. I don’ see how she kin — he sech er tiresome puson — but she mus’, or she wouldn’t keep gwine wid ’im so. De Majer is a fine man in his way — but Lawd, his way! I don’ see how she kin ever git up de courage to merry ’im ’cepin’ she think she won’t have to be so perlite to ’im after she got ’im, an’ kin tell ’im what she think uv some uv his doins’, an’ an’ break ’im uv his bad habits. Wimmin is mighty curious — if dey likes er man tol’ble well, dey’ll put up wid er heap f’om ’im ’fo’ dey is merried, an’ den merry ’im on de faith uv breakin’ ’im in arterwards.”

“Dat’s er mighty risky bis’ness, doh,” put in Aunt Sally, “an’ hit takes er strong-minded ’oman to do dat way. I’s broke Jim Thomas uv one or two bad habits since we’s been married, but for de mos’ part I purged ’im ’fo’ I ever tol’ ’im I’d take ’im. He had er bad habit uv chewin’ terbacco an’ spittin’ in comp’ny, an’ I tol’ ’im up an’ down if I ever see ’im do dat ergin he never would call me his wife. He stopped mighty quick, I tell yer; but after we was merried he thought he could start it ergin, as he had me den, an’ spittin’ husband’s wa’ no ground fur er ’vorce. But Lawd! — he didn’t keep it up long. I had ’im too, an’ I knowed dat er wife was a priv’lige charicter, an’ could use de broomstick, while er sweetheart had to ’fine ’erse’f to threats.

“But ittakes er strong-minded ’oman like I is to do dat: wife’s broomstick is stronger ’suasion dan sweetheart’s

threats, but it ain't every 'oman whar kin use it. Miss Helen better be keerful, if she ever 'spec' to merry de Majer, how she trus' to de broomstick: she better break 'im in 'fo' she merry 'im; he mought be stronger-minded dan she is, an' wouldn't take kindly to de broom handle."

"Well," said Uncle Billy after a pause, "I 'spec' you is right 'bout dat—Miss Helen better break 'im in 'fo' she take 'im, but I don' see how she gwi' do it. Dis breakin' in bus'ness ain't no easy job nohow, an' you know de Majer is er pow'ful sensitive man wid er mighty high 'pinion uv hisse'f; an' Miss Helen know as well as I does, dat if she ever gits arter 'im 'bout anything, he gwi' git 'fended an' hurt, an' ten to one by de debil's clock if he ever notice 'er agin. De Majer ain't got no idea how folks laughs at his 'culiarities—he ain't got no kith an' kin to tell 'im 'bout it; an' yuther folks don' like to do it; cons'quently he goes on an' gits mo' and mo' curious an' sot in his ways. If he jes' had somebody to 'vise 'im how to do an' how to court, he might come out all right. Ev'body kin see he's dead took wid Miss Helen; but gwine on as he does, talkin' pigs, an' grass, an' fresh meat, an' cabbages, I don' see how he ever gwi' win 'er. He thinks cause he takes 'er intrust in sech things dat ev'body else does, too. If he would jes' talk 'bout flowers stid o' grass, an' de moon stid o' cabbages, an' de stars stid o' guano; if he'd jes' tell 'er 'bout pictures an' poets an' sech sentermints—followin' de track uv sech subjie's till he git to love, an' den grab 'er 'round de waist an' tell 'er how he love 'er—he mought do suppin. But gwine on like he is now—shoo!—he never will git 'er 'cept she do de courtin'."

There was silence for some time. Uncle Billy puffed meditatively at his pipe, and gazed abstractedly into the fire. Presently he arose and went and knocked the ashes out of his pipe against the andiron.

"Tell you what I gwi' do, Sis Sally," he said with the deliberate dignity and pride of one who had solved a great problem, — "tell you what I gwi' do — I gwi' 'vise de Majer."

"Lawd o' mercy!" exclaimed Annt Sally, "— what you talkin' 'bout man! — you gwi' 'vise de Majer? — what you gwi' 'vise 'im to do? — you's colored — de Majer is er high-tone white man — what you talkin' 'bout visin' 'im fur?"

"Don't keer if he is," replied Uncle Billy determinedly — "I know some things you don' know, an' you know some things I don' know, an' er grasshopper know some things bofe un us don' know. Dere's heap o' difunt kinds o' wisdoms in dis worl', an' er man knows dat bes' whar he done had 'sperience wid. 'Cause er man is white, an' got book-larnin' it don't follow dat he knows everything. Dere's heap o' larnin whar ain't in no book — I knows dat if I is ignunt. Er man can't know hisse'f by readin' uv books, an' he can't know wimmin folks. Now de Majer don' know hisse'f, an' he don' know wimmin folks. I knows de Majer, an' I ought to know suppin' 'bout wimmin folks, bein' I's had three wives. Now I ax you what gwi' hen' me f'om givin' de Majer er few pints on dem subjie's?"

"You talk like you know mighty lot 'bout us wimmin folks," said Aunt Sally, — "huccum you to know so much?"

“It’s jes’ like I tell you,” continued Uncle Billy, ignoring her question, — “it’s jes’ like I tell you — de Majer don’ know his own pus’nal ’culiarities, an’ he don’ know how to handle wimmin folks — how to please ’um an’ court ’um. Er man is got to lay ’side all pus’nal curiousness when he ’dresses er ’oman, an’ he got to ’dapt hisse’f to her way uv thinkin’. I gwi’ try in er perlite an’ sorter off-han’ way to see if I can’t open de Majer’s eyes on dose pints.

“You see er bach’ler-man like de Majer is apt to be curious an’ sot in his ways — he don’ hab no wife to knock off de rough aidges wid her tongue an’ de broom-stick; an’ it’s puffectly natchul dat er bach’ler-man don’ know as much ’bout wimmin as er merried man. Er merried man is in cunstunt contac’ wid er ’oman, an’ he larns all de ins and outs uv dat ’oman any way. He knows what’ll rile ’er, an’ he knows what’ll please ’er mighty soon, I tell you. Dar ain’t nothin’ like er strong-minded wife fur gittin’ er man out uv his pus’nal cur’osities.

“All wimmin is difunt, an’ all is curious, but if you know one un ’em well, it’ll he’p you mighty in yo’ dealin’s wid de yuthers. Dey is all difunt, an’ yit dey is all like. Dar’s cert’in gin’ral princ’ples whar ’plies to ’em all. If you got er wife you larns dem gin’ral princ’ples mighty soon, an’ den you is pretty well qualyified to deal wid wimmin. Ev’body knows dat er widow-man is er heap better an’ mo’ ’cessful courter dan er man whar ain’t never been merried.

“Yas, I gwi’ give de Majer some pints — I gwi’ tell ’im er trick or two — dat I is.”

“ You kin do like you please,” said Aunt Sally, — “ I don’t keer — I ain’t got to bear de ’spons’bil’ty ; but you better be keeful.”

Uncle Billy got up and walked to the door. “ You jes’ wait,” he said, and went out.

Major Owen did not get back from the widow Weatherford’s that night until eleven o’clock, and then he seemed to be in a very bad humor indeed. With something that sounded very like an oath he called Uncle Billy out to take the horse, and then without another word went into the house and slammed the door. Uncle Billy, as he passed the window with the horse, saw him through the half closed shutters, pacing the floor up and down.

“ Suppin wrong wid de Majer, sho-pop,” he said to himself, — “ reggin he gin’er ernother dose uv wire-grass dis evenin’ an’ she couldn’t hol’ herse’f in no longer, but kicked out de traces an’ scattered things.”

The next day was Sunday. Uncle Billy, as usual, came to the door while the Major was at breakfast. “ ’Spose you want de kerridge hook up to take de widow to chuch to-day ? ” he inquired.

“ No, I don’t,” said the Major gruffly, “ but you can hitch the buggy, and drive me to church.” A little later the buggy was brought, and they started.

“ Seem like you was ailin’ las’ night, Major,” said Uncle Billy, after they had proceeded some distance in silence, “ mus’ had de toothache.”

“ No, no, Billy,” the Major ripped out as though he was glad to open the flood-gates of his suppressed troubles at last, — “ no, but she has kicked me good and square —

kicked me, I say, kicked me so hard I haven't been clear-headed since. I can't realize it, Billy, — I can hardly take it in — I thought she would jump at me. But she refused me in the most humiliating way. By Jove! I never have loved her as I do now; but it's all over."

And the Major leaned forward with his face in his hands, and uttered a groan. Whatever sentiment he had in his nature had certainly come to the front at last. There was silence for a time; and then Uncle Billy spoke with great gravity: —

"Majer, lemme ax you a question, — how did you 'proach 'er — how did you pop de question an' come to de pint? "

"Well, Billy," Major Owen replied in a disconsolate voice, "I thought I'd interest and impress her with a sense of my worthiness and prosperity, so I started in and told her of my farm, fruit, garden, crops, and horses and pigs: I told her about the fine suit of clothes I had on — asked her to feel what good quality they were, and told her how much they cost. Finally I came right out and asked her to fix the day for our wedding; that I liked her as well as any woman I had ever seen, and I believed I would like to marry her. Then I reached out and put my arm around her, and tried to kiss her, when — Great Jupiter! if a bombshell had gone off under the sofa I couldn't have been more surprised."

"What happened den, Majer?" Uncle Billy asked in a soft, sympathetic voice.

"I hardly know what happened, Billy, but I know she jerked her head away, and gave me a look, and I saw something like lightning shoot from her eyes. Bless my soul if

I don't believe it was lightning, too, from the effect it had on me. It seemed to shrivel me right up — it just seemed to blast my very soul. I felt like the most miserable wretch in the world — like a criminal about to be hung. It was some time before I recovered myself, and in the meantime I must have been staring at her like an idiot. I remember she returned my look, but said nothing, and the lightning kept flashing from those eyes. After a while I managed to stutter: 'What's — what's the matter, Helen?'

" 'Don't call me Helen, Sir!' she said, and the words came out like the spit of an angry cat, — 'You are very offensive to me — please leave the house.'

"And I got up and left, and was glad to get out too: the fire and brimstone in that room was too much for me."

The Major ceased talking. Uncle Billy seemed to be deeply preoccupied in guiding the horses around a big mud hole. Having accomplished this, he sat immovable for several moments, in deep thought, his eyes fixed on the ground. At length he spoke as though to himself, in a soft voice, scarcely audible, but full of suppressed feeling: —

"Je-e-sus de Lam' uv Gawd! "

"Well, what's the matter, Billy?" the Major inquired, paying no attention to the profanity of the interjection; for it was a customary one with Uncle Billy, who probably through unconscious wrong-doing used it as sinlessly as it could be used.

"Whew-ee!" Billy whistled, "Gawd A'mighty, Majer, didn't you know no better dan dat? Don't you know wimmin folks better dan dat? How you spec de 'oman to have you when you ax 'er like you was doin' 'er de greatest

favor in de worl'—like you was low'in' yose'f to ax 'er? Difunt wimmin is got to be won in difunt ways, but you ain't gwine to get *no* 'oman like dat.

“ Now er man in er pit kin see some things whar er man on de mount'in can't see: de ant he know one or two things whar de elephint ain't never thought 'bout; an' er ole fool mought have found out er trick or two whar de young smart man ain' never dream uv. Now you is high, an' I is low: you is got edgycation, au' I ain't got none; yit howsomever, dyah mought be er little I knows an' you don' know.”

He paused as though to give time to these sage observations to take effect, and then continued: —

“ Majer, I's er heap older man than you, I's been er knowin' you ever since you was knee high to a duck. I been tote you on my back, an' been think all de worl' uv you my whole life. Now, s'pose I take de lib'ty uv 'visin' you er little — what you gwi' think uv me? ”

“ Go ahead, Billy, I feel like a baby could advise me this morning,” the Major said humbly.

“ I's glad to hear you talk like dat, Majer, — she done you good already — ain't never hear you talk so humble befo'.

“ You see, Majer, it's jes' dis way; — you been er bach'ler-man all yo' life, an' you done got proud an' cunceited and sot in yo' ways, an' you don' know how to wuk wimmin folks. Er man can't court er 'oman 'cordin' to his ideas — he got to court 'em 'cordin' to dere ideas if he spec to git um. Some wimmin has to be won wid humbleness; some wid bol'ness an' masterfulness; an' yuthers you have to play

like er fish, 'vancin' when dey 'vance, an' retreatin' when dey retreat. 'Fo' you try to win er 'oman's heart — study yo' 'oman; dat's de main thing, an' when you know 'er, you got 'er.

“I been had heap o' sperience wid wimmin folks in my time — three wives, an' de Lawd knows how many sweet-hearts; an' I know what I is talkin' 'bout. But I ain't never see two wimmin yit whar could be wukked alike; an' I ain't never see one 'oman whar could be wukked alike at two difunt times. In courtin' any 'oman you got to 'ceed on de gin'ral princ'ples uv her cunst'uton as fur as you kin, but you got to vary dem princ'ples 'cordin' to de fancy an' de state uv her min' at de time uv de courtin.' I had to use difunt princ'ples in courtin' all my wives. My fus' wife was er mighty 'ligious 'oman, an' I brought her 'round by larnin' texts f'om de Bible an' spoutin' dem at 'er. She was er mighty good 'oman, an er man could do anything wid 'er if he jes' knew 'nough texts. Moses Martin, de colored preacher, knowed mo' texts dan I did, an' he got 'er 'way f'om me arter while — 'stranged her 'fections, but I always blamed myself fur dat: I ought to knowed mo' texts.

“My secon' wife was er airyfied young gal — plump an' yaller as a punkin, — fon' o' jew'lry an' fine cloze an' puffumery, an' jes' as crazy arter red as er mad bull. I got me er coat wid tails whar dragged de groun': I got me er necktie an' ves' de color uv Miss Helen's red jewranium, an' er collar whar took me under de yers. I kivered my fingers wid prize-box rings, an' put di'mons in my shut bosom mos' big as hin's aiggs. I got

me de bigges' seegar in de country: I po'ed muss cologne all over myse'f; an' den I sailed in fur 'er. Lawd! I tell you I was jes' dazzlin' — I didn't have no trouble wid 'er. 'Twas er heap o' men folks 'round 'er payin' 'er 'ten-tion, but she seem like she fergot dey was livin' when she seed me. I could see dat my red ves' an' di'mons had mos' done took her bre'f away. I got close to 'er, an' I puffed my seegar, an' I fanned de puffumery uv de muss cologne in 'er face. De yuther bucks seed dat I was de cock-uv-de-walk, an' dat de jig was up wid dem, an' dey went off an' lef' us. Den I made short wuk uv de matter. She come 'round so easy, an' was so willin' dat I felt like I hadn't done much to git 'er. An' I hadn't neither. Arter we was merried sometime, hyah come er feller wid seegars an' di'mon's little bigger dan mine, an' some muss cologne er little stronger — and away she went, an' I ain't never seed her since.

“ De love uv young gals like dat is largely er matter uv who kin sport de reddest necktie, or who is got de shiniest shoes. Up to er sartin age gals love er peacock; but arter while dey loves er bird wid mo' meat an' less feathers.

“ Now, Majer, you knows Miss Helen as well as I does — you know she got er cuns'tution whar enjoys po'try an' flowers an' sech things; an' what de name o' Gawd you want to keep tellin' 'er 'bout 'tatoes, an' grass, an' all dem things fur? If you want to git 'er, you got to 'duc' yo' campaign in er difunt way. I tell you what to do. Jes' lie low till you gits over de so'ness uv dis kick, an' den go fur her ag'in, but go in er difunt manner f'om what you been goin'. Drap yo'se'f; yo' farm, yo' cloze, an' all dem

subbie's when you is in her comp'ny; an' what she wants to 'verse 'bout, dats what you wants to 'verse 'bout. You wants to git you some po'try books, an' squ't po'try at 'er till she can't res' — she likes dat — dey say 'er fus' husban' when he was a-courtin' 'er, talked in rhyme mos' all de time. You mus' git up some pretty ideas 'bout de moon an' stars, an' take 'er out in de moonshine an' shoot dem at 'er wid heavy sighs 'tween de loads. You mus' study flowers an' pictures — start er flower garden on yo' place — tell 'er you thinkin' 'bout larnin' how to paint — mos' have er fit when you hear pretty music; an' when you see er fi'ry sunset holler like you gwine crazy.

“ Do all dem things gradual like, an' make 'er b'lieve yo' love fur her done change de fundymental mudsills uv yo' cuns'tution. Wimmin will b'lieve sech things heap sooner dan you think. Dey's got right smart cunceit, an' dey thinks when er man is in love wid 'em dat his love is pow'ful 'nough to do anything. Make 'er think yo' love acts on yo' soul like 'east on bread, an' makes it rise.

“ 'Nother thing, Majer, when you gin 'er presents, don't you go an' sen' her er bar'l uv cabbages, like you done las' Chrismus, or chines an' spyar-ribs, like you done on 'er birfday. Sech things would be mighty good presents fur yo' wife, but somehow dey don't look jes' right fur er sweetheart. Sweethearts like airy, dilicate things: dey's heap mo' fanciful an' airyfied dan er wife. You sen' 'er vi'lets an' roses, candy, books, an' all dem things.

“ Las', you got to hol' in mind de fac' she is er widow 'oman; an' you got to be ticklish on dat account. Er man has to be mo' keerful in 'dressin' er widow dan he does wid

any yuther 'oman. My 'sperience is dat widow wimmin is mo' anxious to git merried, but harder to bring 'round dan yuther wimmin. You see dey is always got to compyar you wid dere fus' husban', an' if you lack dis or dat whar de fus' husban' didn't lack, it makes ag'in you.

"Den in dealin' wid widows, you got to be mighty keerful in regard to de fus' husban' — how you talks 'bout 'im, an' so-fo'f. Some widows likes to talk 'bout dere fus' husban' all de time; while yuthers don' never speak uv 'im, an' you wouldn't know dey'd ever had any. Hit all 'pends 'pon de cunst'ution uv de widow. Wid some uv 'em, a fus' husban', if you use 'im right, is de bridge whar you kin go in her heart on: wid yuthers, de fus' husban', if you go to foolin' wid 'im, might be er wall to keep you out uv her heart. So you see you got to be mighty ticklish in handlin' de fus' husban', an' mus' always gin her de lead. If she lef' 'im in de grave — you lef' 'im dyah too: if she keep pullin' 'im out an' makin' er saint uv 'im — you do it too, an' 'gree wid 'er puffectly.

"I don' know how Miss Helen is in respic' to her fus' husban', but I tell you be keerful, an' study yo' 'oman — fus' an' las' — study yo' 'oman."

"I believe you are right, Billy," said the Major, as the advice was concluded, — "I think there is a great deal of truth and good sense in what you say, and that I have been acting the part of an ass for a long time. I never thought of it before, but I see now what a fool I've been."

"Thank Gawd!" fervently responded Uncle Billy — "Hit's jes' like I tol' Sis Sally, — all you needed was somebody to open yo' eyes, an' now I know you'll git her

if you go 'bout it right. You ain't been no bigger fool dan mos' bach'ler men: I's a fool myse'f till I got merried an' had er wife to juk de kinks outer me. Lawd! by de time you's had three wives, like I is, you'll know suppin'."

"Yes," continued the Major, "I thank you for your advice, and I am going to follow your plans, and start right now — whoa — stop the horse, Billy, and get out and pull me that passion flower and a piece of that love-vine growing there; I'll put them on my coat — she'll be at church to-day, and they will show her my appreciation of flowers, and at the same time express the state of my feelings."

"Wait er minnit — lemme see 'bout dat," said Uncle Billy, stopping the horse, and pulling his beard meditatively. "She's 'gusted an' mad wid you now, an' you don't want to start in too brash. Dyar ain't but two ways uv dealin' wid er mad 'oman: one is to tu'n 'er cross yo' lap an' gin 'er er a good spankin'; an' de yuther is to be as humble as er Quaker puppy dog, an' be willin' to lick de very soles uv 'er feet till she gits pleased. De fus' way 'plies almos' 'sclusively to merried gentmuns, an' only to dem when dey is better men dan dere wifes is. De yuther way is de one you got to follow. I think dat love-vine an' passion bloom would look too bol' an' brazin jes' at dis time. You wants to look mo' grovelin' an' humble till she gits pleased wid you. If I's gwi' war' any flowers, think I'd take er little piece uv dat everlastin' dyar — dey uses dat at fun'als, an' on graves, an' dat'll gin you er sorter humble an' pitiful look — show her dat you kee fur even de homeliest flowers; an' if she keers to draw 'elusions f'om it consarnin' de state uv yo' heart, it'll please 'er to think

yo' 'fection is everlastin' in spite uv de go-by she's done gin you."

This logic was irresistible. The Major soon had a dainty spray of the everlasting in his buttonhole, and they went on their way.

After church, Mrs. Weatherford greeted the Major with a frigid bow; but her sister, Mrs. Travers, who was a warm-hearted little woman, with deepest sensibilities, and a very keen sense of humor, spoke to him cordially. The picture of humility, the Major walked with them silently to their carriage, and with downcast eyes helped them in.

"Major, won't you go by and dine with us to-day?" Mrs. Travers asked him.

"Thank you, no,—I can't go to-day," replied the Major. "What beautiful roses you have on, Mrs. Travers," he continued, conscious that the widow heard every word,— "couldn't you spare me one?"

"With pleasure," she replied, tactfully concealing the surprise she felt at the request.

The Major took the rose, and humbly pressed it to his lips.

"Thank you—good-bye," he said, raising his hat, as he turned away.

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Travers to her sister, when they had driven off,— "did you ever!—What can have come over the spirit of the Major's dreams? I never saw him wearing flowers before, or take any notice of them. I didn't know he was conscious that flowers had ever been created. Did you hear him admire my roses, and beg for one?"

"O yes, I heard him," Mrs. Weatherford answered nonchalantly, — "and like you I was surprised that the *animal* noticed a flower."

Time rolled on, and the Major conducted his campaign according to the tactics laid down by Uncle Billy. People wondered at the change in him. Several times had he been caught reading romances and books of poetry; and his bouquet had become a part of him: it would have been the subject of comment had he appeared without it. Uncle Billy was consulted more and more frequently on strategic points as the time for a crisis seemed to be drawing near.

"Yas," he was telling the Major, "I thinks you done got on fine. Dem vi'lets an' candy an' books an' things done brought 'er 'round, sho's you born. Watch yo' pints now, an' keep er clear head, an' she's yo' meat."

"Think I'll settle the matter to-morrow," said the Major, — "I am tired of being in suspense. I've done my best, and if she's ever going to have me, she'll do it now."

"Well yas," said Uncle Billy, "I 'spec' 'tis 'bout time. As I says, you is 'parently done pretty well, and she seems to kinder favor you now. You's made one or two blunder-in's, but I don't think dey 'mounted to much. Sis Sally tol' me she looked kinder 'gusted when you sent 'er dat mess o' turnup salad on Volentine Day; but as it happened she was very fon' uv turnup salad, an' it didn't make much difunee. You ought never sent it, dough, widout cun-sultin' me."

"Yas, I speck you might as well settle de matter to-morrow. As de Bible says, dyar's er time fur all things —

dyar's er time to sen' books an' flowers an' things, an' dyar's er time to pop de question. It's wid wimmin like it's wid yuther things—you got to strike while de i'on's hot."

The next afternoon, the Major, having put on his best, was ready to go and find out his doom from the widow.

"What sort of flowers had I better wear, Billy?" he inquired, as the old darkey was inspecting him to see that he was in proper trim.

"Lemme see 'bout dat," said Billy removing his hat, and scratching his head pensively, — "lemme see 'bout dat — dis is er mighty critereul time, an' you can't be too keerful. Lemme see — roses, vi'lets — naw: buddercups, — cow-itch — pa'tridge pea — pizen ivy: naw, — dey won't do: — clover, hogweed, wire-grass — naw my Gawd! Tell de trufe, Majer, I spec you better war' *no* flowers dis time. You an' I don't know 'nough 'bout flowers to tell what kind would be safe on dis critereul 'casion, an' it's bes' not to run any risk. Wimmin is so curious an' pertic'ler, dey got feelin's an' notions jes' like er razor aidge — dey gits turned mos' if you look at 'em. Naw, Sah, it's bes' to be on de safe side. I 'vise you not to war *no* flowers, Majer."

"All right, Billy, I won't. Have you got any further advice to give me before I go?"

"Naw, Sah, — I b'lieve I done tol' you all I got to tell you — been tryin' to get you ready fur dis time uv judgement fur delas' ten munts. I'll tell you dough, as lás' words, to let her do most uv de courtin' if she will; an' be mighty keerful 'bo utdat fus' husban'. She's apt to bring 'im up at sech er time, if she ain't never done it before. Be keer-

ful wid dat dead husban', an' let her gin you de lead in every thing if she will. Good-bye, — an' Gawd gin you good luck: I done all I kin fur you. You got to weed de balance uv de row by yo'se'f."

Major Owen came back that night looking the picture of woe. Uncle Billy met him, gave him a look, and feared the worst.

"How did you come out, Majer?" he inquired in a sympathetic voice.

"I am afraid the jig's up with me, Billy," the Major replied disconsolately.

"Gin you de go-by ag'in, did she?"

"Not in so many words, Billy, but I could see very plain how the land lay, and I was afraid to ask her — saw it was no use."

"How was dat, Major?"

"Well you see, Billy, I thought first to entertain and please her, and get her in a good humor; so I started to tell her about art and literature, and all that sort of thing, when — bless my soul! — I couldn't make any headway before she'd catch me up, and try to turn the conversation to farming, cattle, crops, and all those things that used to make her so angry when I talked of them. She asked me all about my hogs and garden and cattle, till I found out she was just trying to make a fool of me, and was laughing at me up her sleeve; and then I got up and left. I wasn't going to give her the pleasure of kicking me again — why, what's the matter? — you —"

He was interrupted by peals of laughter from Uncle Billy, who was apparently speechless in the paroxysms of his

amusement. After shaking for several moments in that laughter which is silent and almost painful through its excessiveness, he finally managed to control his risible faculties, and recover his breath.

“Hurrah! Majer,” he cried, — “you’s all right — you got ’er jes’ whar you want ’er. When er ’oman do like dat, you got ’er — you hyar me — you got ’er, Sah. She tryin’ to please *you* now: she gwine ’ginst de grain to please you now; an’ when er ’oman do dat, you kin bet yo’ las’ cint you got ’er. Yas Lawd, — go over dere de fus’ thing in de mornin’, an’ fix de matter up. You don’t have to be keerful now — sail in any slap-dash sorter way, an’ you bound to lan’ ’er. Kin war’ any flowers, an’ jes’ as many as you choose: war’ er bunch uv dem passion blooms big as yo’ head if you chooses, an’ wrop ’em round wid er rope uv love-vine big as er steer chain. Yassir, — you got ’er whar you want ’er now, an’ *you* kin do de leadin’ — kin be as reckless wid dat dead husban’ as you please now.”

Next morning Uncle Billy and Aunt Sally were in the kitchen at Mrs. Weatherford’s, and the Major was up in the parlor. He had been reassured by Uncle Billy’s view of the widow’s behavior, and was going to try his luck again.

“How you think he gwi’ come out, Sis Sally?” Uncle Billy was saying.

“Don’t know, Brer Billy, — things look like dey is in jes’ as bad er fix now as dey was befo’ you gin yo’ ’vice. Dey’s done see-sawed ’round, but ’pears to be in jes’ er bad way. Majer used to talk guano an’ ’taters, an’ Miss Helen talked books an’ po’try, — now, Majer, he talk books an’ po’try, and Miss Helen talk ’taters an’ guano. I don’ see

how dey is any mo' kumpatible dan dey ever was. Dey is done swop 'round, but it looks like dey is gwine to rub one an'er de wrong way jes' as much.

"Las' night at de supper table, thought I'd buss wid laughin'. Miss Helen ast de Majer suppin 'bout his corn. De Majer he kinder blesh an' stammer—gin her er short answer, an' change de subje quick as he could; an' den started to squ't out er lot uv po'try. Miss Helen 'pear like she didn't hear de po'try, but kept on pumpin' uv 'im 'bout de craps, while he kept tryin' to 'vade 'er, an' tu'n 'er off by squ'tin' his po'try. Mrs. Travers got in er tickle an' mos' had to leave de table. But dyar dose two sot, jes' ser'ous as judges, — she talkin' farmin', an' he squt'in' rhymes.

"Naw, I don' see how dey is ever gwi' come togedder — dat I don't."

"Well," said Uncle Billy, "we'll wait an' see. I got er difunt 'pinion 'bout it: you'll see dat—Hush!—" he broke off listening. — "I hear de Majer an' Miss Helen gwine out in de garden to take er walk. Dyar dey go—you hear dat don't you?"

"Yes dyar dey go," said Aunt Sally, who walked to the window and looked out. — "I got to go out dere myse'f, prezny, arter dem cloze I hung out to dry. Dey seems to be walkin' 'long right frien'ly an' quiet like—reggin dey'd git on better if dey didn't talk."

"Dunno 'bout dat," said Uncle Billy, taking up a live coal in his fingers, and placing it on his pipe, — "but let um paddle de own boat—done all I kin fur 'em—done gin de Majer de benefit uv all my 'sperience wid wimmin. Dat's de bes' I kin do."

“ ‘Scuse me er minnit, Brer Billy,” Aunt Sally said, opening the door, — “ I got to go after dem cloze.”

In a little while she came back, evidently in a state of the greatest excitement. She slammed the door, and dropped the clothes in the dirt.

“ Lam’ o’ Gawd! ” she gasped, — “ I walked up on em’, an’ de Majer had ’er in his arms a-kissin’ uv ’er squar’ in de mouf, an’ she didn’t seem to be makin’ no ’sistance neither! ”

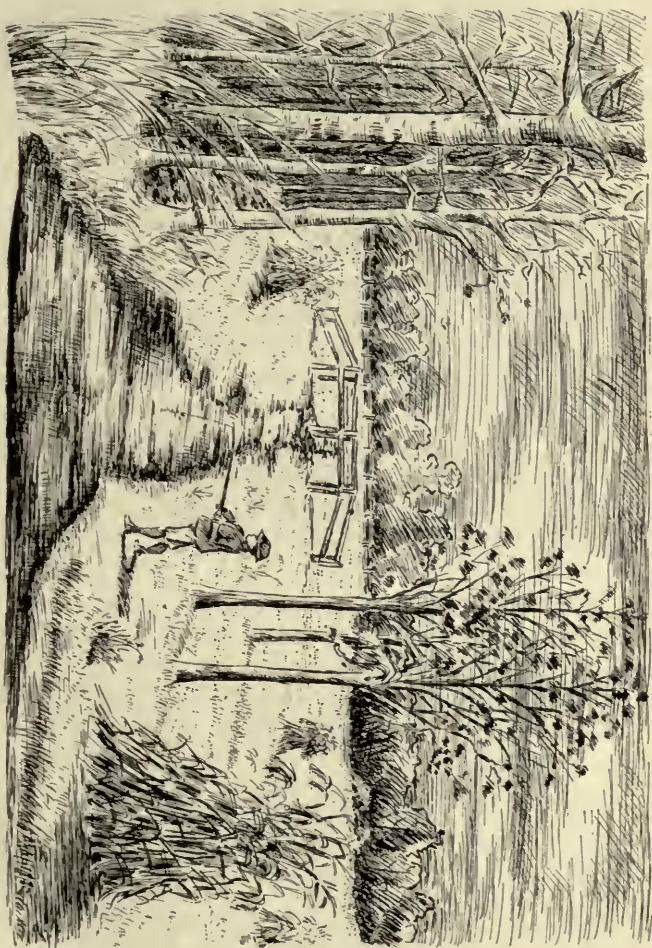
Aunt Sally sank panting into a chair, as though quite overcome by the thought of this last observation.

“ Humph,” grunted Uncle Billy carelessly, — “ no mo’n what I ’spected. Dat’s de ’sult uv my ’vice. Whyn’t you pick dem cloze up outer de dirt, ’oman? ”

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To one who sees it aright, there is nothing more beautiful than a November day. The happier characteristics of the other seasons seem united in the late Indian Summer days to give us something ideal. There is the plaintive sweetness of spring, without its languor; the warmth and richness of summer, without its heat; and while winter's sterner temperament is absent, there is enough of its fresh and bracing air to give tone and vigor to the combination. November is the unison of the year's tenderest moods: it is the echo, the last sweet quavering strain of a grand swelling harmony, — full of poetry, full of sentiment, full of sadness. It is that placid, half-ethereal meeting-ground of life and death, where Winter, with softened grimness, takes Summer resigned and yielding into his arms, and bears her gently, slowly away.

Most of the leaves have fallen. A few bright yellow ones still cling to the lower branches of the mulberry trees, giving a striking and vivid dash of color to the landscape, which is fast becoming wintry. The mulberry leaves are among the first to show the effect of the frost. When, after a pinching autumn night, you see those at the top of the tree shrunken and dark, you may know that Jack Frost



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has come. Those lower, hold their own somewhat longer; but after a succession of frosty nights, some morning when the sun strikes them they will begin to tumble all at once in legions. The warmth of the sun appears to precipitate the work of the frost, and in a few hours the boughs will be nearly denuded.

On the giant sycamores, too, some straggling leaves of mottled brown and green remain, clinging tenaciously to the twigs through the fickle season's alternate change from blustering winter to genial summer, and wildly dancing in a seeming vain effort to hide the nakedness of the half bare tree. They will soon give up and drop, — one by one when the day is mild and still, in hundreds when the gusty winds blow. They will join the myriads of their comrades that already lie in the hollows of the lawn and in the fence corners, and with them will race and circle with the whirlwind, dancing fantastically back and forth in Nature's carnival till April.

There was once a great painter, who feeling his final illness upon him, asked that his easel be placed by his bedside that he might paint his last picture. As his life slowly ebbed, he worked, and there shone from the picture a light and an inspiration as though from another world. There was expression, and soul, and a beautiful sadness in it, and, withal, a strange deep joy, such as a spirit fast prisoned in mortal clay could neither have conceived nor guided the hand that wrought it.

So would November seem the masterpiece of the moribund year. There is a tone in her sunshine, a tint in her skies, which we find at no other season. The haze of her golden

hours spreads over the land like a mysterious mantle of beauty — a grateful winding sheet gently drawn over the paling features of dying Nature. A halo seems to hover over the earth; light and shadows are more intense; the landscape is more vivid, more forcible. There's tonic in the air, which gives enthusiasm to life, and zest to outdoor movement and action. The atmosphere is more resonant. Sounds are carried, clear and musical, for great distances. Echoes, unknown before, spring up as though spontaneously generated in the cold, crystalline air. The bay of the coursing hounds in the far forest comes melodiously softened across the reaches of field and meadow. The merry voices and laughter of school-children, as they return home upon the highway, are distinct at half a mile. The cry of the wagoner to his team, and the sharp crack of his whip; the call of a belated partridge, lost from his flock which some huntsman has scattered; the hoarse call of the wild geese winging their southward flight high over the houses and trees; — these are the voices — these and many others, which with the chirp and twitter of migrating birds, proclaim November's advent.

Yes, November is the last smile of the dying year; a tender thought in the bosom of time; the opal of the calendar.

Now we hear the ring of the woodcutter's axe, — a resonant, musical, half-metallic sound, echoing far and clear in the rimy air, as the lusty chopper plies blow after blow upon the sturdy log. An adept in woodcraft may often tell the kind of tree which is being cut from the sound of the chopping. Hickory, being a hard wood, the axe rings loud and

sharp when it is struck. Oak has a more heavy, but duller note; while in pine, that being much softer, the sound of the impact is more a dull thud devoid of all resonance.

There is no sound more suggestive of winter and its pleasures than that of wood-cutting. As the axe rings out, thought leads to thought. We think of that charming old household god, now — alas! — fast going out of fashion, — the great open fire of logs. What associations cluster around it! How dear it is to all of us who have known it! It is the symbol of broad hospitality, deep, domestic love, and firm family endearment and ties. The great open fire is emblematic of the great open heart; we can see and feel its glorious warmth and beneficence — its rich and full diffusion of good and true influences. It is a thing of life — it exists as an institution well founded in human affections. It has lent its genial qualities, its loyal integrity, its graceful beauty, and its inspiration to History, Poetry and Art. Artists have painted it; poets have sung of it; orators have eulogized it, paying it rich tribute in immortal words; and patriots and martyrs have spoken of it in sincere words laden with their heart's earnestness. A potent factor in the upbuilding of the race, morality, stability, fidelity, and sterling honesty of temperament have been nurtured in the fostering warmth of its flame. It is the center of all home life; the cynosure of steadfast devotion and real worth; the symbol of all happy and pure social intercourse. Peace, contentment, kindness, and good cheer are its grateful emanations, while broad and gracious hospitality radiates from every beam of its merry light. There is nothing which has been more instrumental in drawing heart to

heart: in the history of the race there has been no greater humanizer. While the shivering savages drew close around the cheery blaze in the bleak northern forests, suffering man met suffering man about the common center; acts of assistance, words of mutual sympathy passed between them, and charity, altruism and philanthropy were born.

What a pity that this time-honored and beneficent spirit should be banished from the household! But with the old grandmother with her knitting and spinning wheel, — with the sturdy oak that stood grim and gigantic in the virgin forests, it is gone. The holy hour of the twilight gloaming has fled the land. The sweet inspiration of the evening muse and reverie is no more. The mingled glow and colors of a thousand summer sunsets no longer flares and flickers on our hearth. The lithe wood flame no longer croons as it plays in fantastic jets over the big logs. Where now shall the children roast their apples and potatoes? Where shall Bruno stretch his shaggy form to bask in comfort while he takes his snooze? What is there to bring the blood tingling back to the cheeks after a frosty drive, or by its very presence, to send a thrill of cheer and comfort to the heart of the benumbed traveler? Where will the corn be popped, the chestnuts roasted? Where will the family circle gather now in sympathetic communion of soul. Let us rue the death of our dear, old, venerable friend, which was the comforter of the cold; the companion of the solitary; the solace of the low-spirited, and a good tutelary Genius to us all.

What a cheerless, uncompanionable thing a stove is! The coal fire with its dirty yellow flames, and its thick

heavy smoke, is little better. There is a lack of life, luster and charm about it; it has no mettle, and reminds one of machinery, factories, and the grosser phases of humanity. It possesses neither poetry nor sentiment: its very ashes are less attractive than those of the wood fire. And what shall we say of the steam heater and the furnace? Of what are they emblems? What is there in them to expand the heart, or enkindle affection and homelike feeling? Their hot breath is not that of fresh life and buoyant wholesomeness; their warmth lacks all geniality: it warms the body but not the spirit. They are emblematic of a repression and reserve of genuine things; they conceal the heartsome source of comfort and gladness. They stand for cold materialism, dull utility, the philosophy of physical luxury and ease. The fruits of their fetid atmosphere are divorces, lap dogs, and nervous wrecks. In the homes where they exist we often find sentiment on its death-bed, and the soul's higher ideals pale, wan, shadows fading away in the close air of commercialism. The furnace and the steam heater may stand for a higher civilization, but they also mean that there is absent from the home a virility, a strength and hardy freedom that abided there when the forest kings burnt upon the hearth. They mean that the daughters of the land have become, in many instances, artificial hot-house flowers, who, no longer getting their color from the wind and sun as the roses and apples do, have to resort to the dealer in cosmetics around the corner; that they dream unwholesome dreams of erotic sentimentality instead of imbibing true womanhood and real love from the teachings of Nature, and the fresh air of the

forests and meadows, as their grandmothers did: they mean that the sons of the land have lost their stout muscles and fearless independence; that they handle the day-book, the stock ticker, the typewriter, or they measure and cut the yard of ribbon, or clip samples and tie parcels where once the dells resounded to the mighty stroke of their axes, and the hills re-echoed their merry shouts as they drove the teams a-field.

With the departure of the open wood-fire it looks as though dear old Santa Claus must go, too, and cease to be a delightful and beloved charm in the lives of our children. The sweet old legend of childhood! — it suffered a great shock when coal and stoves came into general use; but now, with the furnace and heaters, it would seem that it must go. Sometimes we see the touching sight of tiny stockings hung along the mantel where the fireplace *used* to be. It is a sad travesty on St. Nicholas and the good old times. Where shall Santa enter now? The doors and windows are tight fastened and bolted against the burglarious, midnight intruder — he cannot come in there. Perhaps there are even electric alarms that might frighten the old fellow to the imperilment of his toys, and which might awaken the sleeping innocents so he would be caught. If there be chimneys, they are much too small to admit that rotund personage with his bulging bag of gifts. But it is more than likely there are no chimneys at all, and only steam pipes or narrow flues not big enough to admit the Saint's massive foot. These facts show plainly that Santa has not kept pace with the times, and there must be radical changes in his personality if he does not wish to be a back number. Either he must

reduce his *avouirdupois* to such a degree of attenuation as will allow him to make the descent of a three-inch pipe, or he must acquire the power of witches and genii to pass through the key-hole. His beloved individuality suffers much in either case. There would be something lacking about the Kris Kringle who came into a room other than down the chimney. He would not seem real — he would scarcely be welcome. One would feel like asking him reproachfully, — “How dare you enter here, Sir, in any manner save through the chimney? And your reindeer, where are they? What! — not upon the roof! Who ever heard of a Santa Claus who did not leave his reindeer and sleigh on the roof while he filled the stocking! You certainly *are* a freak.”

But who that has ever known the real Santa Claus would see him lose the smallest jot of his characteristics? That august paunch with its traditional bowl-of-jelly-like agitations; those merry blue eyes all a-sparkle with good will; that pert little cherry-red nose; the long silvery beard; the belt and boots, and the fur coat and high, peaked cap — all of them have been reverend institutions in the lives of children for years past. And the reindeer and the sleigh, and the home at the North Pole, where the great books are kept with their statistics relative to good and bad boys and girls. Must childhood be bereft of all these dear old myths, and become a time of as barren and prosy realism as is maturity?

Yes, it would seem that Santa must go. Already in the towns has he been largely superseded by that comparatively modern innovation the Christmas tree. How tame it is in

comparison — a stuffy, gross thing of tinsel and timber, the creature of philistinism. There is not a particle of mysterious interest connected with it: it is no better than a miniature imitation of a toy and confectionery shop, with its tasteless profusion of goodies and trinkets. There is about it none of that sense of affection, and of hallowed mystery that is attached to Santa Claus. It cannot even be utilized to get the children early to bed on Christmas Eve. And when the little ones awake in the morning — what a flat, lifeless pretense to usher them into the presence of a Christmas tree! There is no pleasurable excitement in picking a tin soldier or a Noah's ark off a twig. Is there a natural, self-respecting child in existence, who had not rather pull one apple out of his stocking than take a whole peck of them off a Christmas tree? The belief that it was brought by Santa Claus will lend to a gift a greater charm than intrinsic value could possibly do. Let the magical influence of Santa but be impressed upon a superannuated jumping-jack or a rickety old go-cart, and their value is enhanced tenfold. The knowledge that a gift was affixed to the branches of the Christmas tree a few hours before by parental hands adds nothing to the enthusiasm with which it is received. The modern juvenile Platos may even look questionably at such performances. At a recent Christmas tree festival a tot was heard to ask its father, who was taking a toy off the tree, — "What you want to tie it up there for? Why didn't you give it to me just so?"

But the delightful exhilaration, the expectant ecstasy of Christmas morning where Santa Claus is a reality; when at the peep of dawn the small, white-robed cherubs slip out of

their beds, and steal to the fireplace to take down their stockings and see what the dear Saint brought. To be pitied is he who has known no such experiences in the fairy-land of childhood. A life without such reminiscences is like a garden without the rose.

After many frosts have fallen, after the trees stand naked, after films of ice have bridged the shallow pools that lie in the meadows,—there will sometimes come a day which one might well take to be a derelict from the ranks of April. Gentle warm winds will blow; there will be snowy clouds enough to vary the monotony, and intensify the color of the deep azure sky; the frogs, whose voices have been hushed by the stiffening of the marshes, will awake from their hibernations, and, coming out, pipe again in the sunny, secluded lowlands; the purple haze and golden sunshine mingle, seeming to vie with each other as to which shall lend the predominant glory to the landscape; birds flit about in the soft, balmy air; the sapsucker gives his jeering cry, as he partakes of his feast of nectar on the apple tree, keeping a wary eye, meanwhile, for the farmer whose rules he is violating; the bluebirds frolic to and fro on the low limbs, warbling their love-notes plaintive and elusive, and now and then exploring and peeping into hollows with a view to spring house-keeping; flocks of sparrows and juncos gather under the trees on the green plats of grass lying like oases in the frost-bitten stretches of lawn: they catch the contagious spirit of the day, and unite in a joyous medley of song. A belated butterfly, his wings ragged, and colors pale, animated by the warmth, will rise from the shelter he had sought in the preceding cold days, and on tremulous wings

flit unsteadily around like the ghost of his former self. Like the flowers, and no more hearty than they, he shows the stress of the biting weather, and like them, too, now makes a struggle for existence on every warm day.

November usually brings the first snow. Some day, towards the month's end, the heavy, black clouds will pile up in the north; gradually they will spread, becoming less black — encroaching and enlarging till the whole visible heavens are a dull, uniform grey. Then it begins to fall gently — very gently — a flake or two tentatively, as though to see if the earth be ready for the virgin mantle of purity. The dull smoke rolls up from the chimneys, and disappears in the grey of the sky. The cardinal seeks the covert of the thick, young cedars, and there expresses his uneasiness by repeated, but subdued cries. Experience tells him that the outlook is to be feared. Snow is always a serious thing with the birds; it is Nature's embargo on their granaries; while perhaps a graver feature is that it exposes them to much greater danger from the freebooters — making them conspicuous at the same time that necessity drives them to places of peril. The first snow always looks more beautiful than subsequent ones. It is a novelty then, and the contrast of the changed face of the world is more striking. Thanksgiving Day, which custom has placed in late November, and the first snow are looked upon in common acceptance as the ushers of Winter. Thanksgiving — the feast of plenty — the time of grateful gladness and festival — had its prototype in all ages, and among nearly all peoples. Always it has been a semi-

religious fête, celebrating the ingathering of the autumn's crops and abundance.

In these days of agnosticism and materialism we should be thankful that the beautiful custom of Thanksgiving is observed, and that it has the sanction of law and government back of it. There has been a great falling away of oldtime faith, and of oldtime customs and traditions. A young nation so jealous of restriction and suppression of liberty in any field of human activity may go to the other extreme, and in its haste to break the old idols of superstition, custom and prejudice, may lose sight of the elements of real truth and worth that they contain. It is well that Thanksgiving is becoming year by year a firmer grounded institution of our national life. By the observance of national holidays we may judge of national integrity. On holidays one has the best insight into the heart of a people. National character reveals itself most plainly in national festivals. Christmas and Thanksgiving are great demolishers of a people's selfishness. They are seasons consecrated to the tenderer feelings of the Great Human Heart; they are times of personal disinterestedness, when a man casts the anchor of his material life, and rests for a while amid the gentle swell of kindly feeling and sympathy. At such times one is led to take the bearings of one's spiritual course. In the busy every-day life we have to hold fast to the helm that steers us through the practical actualities; and we have to keep an eye to the more physical matters — to the corporeal rocks and shoals of material existence. But in the calm of the sacred holidays we have

time to look at the spiritual compass, at the soul's cynosure, and see what our direction is.

Last night there was a nipping frost. The moon was full, and flooded the earth with its cold, beautiful, mysterious light. From the neighboring forest came the intermittent hoot of the Great Horned Owl, sounding with a sepulchral resonance suggestive of ghosts. To-day is the ideal November day — clear, crisp, and invigorating. How can melancholy live in the ozone of an autumn day, which must fill all life with young hope, new strength, and the feeling of the power of accomplishment. This morning the frost lay white and shimmering on the fields. All day long it has been fleeing from the assaults of the sunbeam arrows, till now it holds its position only in the fastnesses of the deepest shade. This is the day for an outdoor ramble and an open air carouse with Nature. Let housed thoughts stay at home. Care and sorrow are mostly indoor creatures. A light heart lives under the open sky.

But there are rainy days in November — dark gloomy days when the wind howls as though in anger at not being able to drive the cold rain even into the fire on your hearth, and quench its warmth and brightness. The outlook is dreary and forbidding: one might stand the wind, or even the rain, and venture out of doors; but the combination of both is enough to put a damper on the courage of Nature's most enthusiastic lover.

On such a day there seems by contrast a profounder joy and contentment in indoor pleasures. The circle of thought and action is circumscribed within the walls of your chamber; the resources of one's individuality are concentrated,

and a greater charm and intensity seem to result to them. The home, the fireside, the domestic joys are heightened, and glow in their truest radiance. The chill November blast fans the flame of home life and love into fuller, larger expansiveness. Every shriek of the tempest, every mad, impetuous dash of the rain against the window brings the house-gods in closer circle around our fire. The wind's wild paean sounds a reveille for pleasant meditation. We draw a wrap around our mental selves, as it were, and settle down in passive enjoyment and impressibility. Thought is given a liberal leash, and straying off into the land of dreams, comes back to us full-handed with treasures gathered in its wanderings.

On a rainy day at home a man is apt to evince the deepest yet most seldom revealed characteristics of his nature. At such a time he puts off and lays aside his world-nature—the external coverings of character which he must need don to fight the every-day battle of life—and his truer individuality is disclosed. In business you see a man as he is in the world, but at home you see him as he is in his heart. Every man has a dual nature, the sentimental and the practical: every man leads two lives, the business life and the home life: one is the conventional, artificial life; the other is the real, the natural life. Sentiment does not do for the world: it is a tender flower which must be cherished in the home. Yet the work of the world is but a preparing of the soil for the flower of sentiment. After the crying needs of life have been met, sentiment is what the right hearted strive for. That there are exceptions; that some, losing sight of the immediate, become absorbed in

the mediate, does not lessen the general truth. Home should be the conservatory of sentiment, but the delicate plants are not likely to bloom and flourish unless tended with that care that comes only from a loving woman's heart. Woman is, or should be, man's home guard, — the protector and keeper of his heart-treasures. She should promote and enlarge the interests of sentiment, while he looks after those of commerce. Woman stands for sentiment, man for practicality: the happy blending and harmonizing of the two should be one of life's aims. Marriage and wedded life without sentiment is always a failure. It is that alone which can make the union a "holy bond," and a sacred institution. So, too, life without sentiment is cold, barren and desolate. It is that only which raises man above the brute. In it are founded all the higher, nobler aspirations of the human soul.

A gloomy day is very conducive to an abandonment of one's self to mental pleasures. All other forms of energy are conserved, and the full voltage of the vital forces are turned into the mind. Out of doors there is nothing to be done — nothing to dissipate the pleasing currents of indoor thought. One feels that one *must* find employment and amusement indoors, and the consciousness of this seems to bring satisfaction. Contentment is often the child of compulsion, especially among those restive persons who always imagine they might be doing something better. And restriction frequently proves the prime factor in the accomplishment of great results. It is necessary to bring the sun's rays to a focus before the intense heat is generated. The imprisonment of John Bunyan gave the world The

Pilgrim's Progress. Milton's blindness was the inspiration of *Paradise Lost*. When the light of the world was cut off, he looked into his soul and wrote what he read there. In the flood of the sun's light he had not seen the sublimest visions of his own heart, but, as the cloud of blindness obscured that light, the flame of his genius flared up in its true radiance and proportions. Constraint and circumscription are often necessary in order for us to see, understand, and appreciate the latent truths of our nature, also its dormant powers. The prisoner learns to love the little mouse which creeps from the crevice of the wall, to nibble the crumbs on the floor, and for the first time he realizes the sympathy, comradeship, and kinship that exist between all things created. The flower when stripped of all other buds yields a most glorious efflorescence in the one which is left. Curtailment and suppression of many forces results in the concentration and strength of one. Affliction and deformity have often borne the rarest fruits with which life is enriched.

Slippers, an easy chair, a dressing gown, a big open *wood* fire, and some good books — these inside, and outside, — a raw, gusty, November day, with the wind chasing the fallen wet leaves across the bleak stretches of lawn and meadow, catching them, anon, and whirling them in mad gyrations till they fall breathless in the thickets and fence corners. And then for a day of solid comfort and enjoyment. From every glance out of the window we turn again to our books and fire with a deeper sense of our good cheer. If any other chief element of happiness could be added to the scene, perhaps it would be the gracious figure of a sweet, loving

helpmate, sitting there close enough that a look into her eyes, and pleasant chat — the mind's recreation — may be had when interest grows dull, or inspiration tardy. And let the hair of this gracious presence be fair and her eyes blue. The hair may be to us the summer's golden sunshine; and her eyes April's violets. There let her sit with book or needle-work, diffusing, like a goddess, the radiance of home happiness about her. This last addition will give practical joy and concrete philosophy to the picture. Books are good enough company as a rule, but there comes a time in every man's life when he wants to feel a little soft warm hand in his; when he wants to look into a pair of eyes eloquent with love's mysteries, and read there things more deep and true than any book can ever contain. It is well enough to grapple with the abstrusities of abstract sciences when one feels strong in the pride of masculine intellect, yet sometimes the highest wisdom of man can do no more than acknowledge its limitations, and throw itself into the arms of woman's love. Her presence there would answer many problems we encountered in our meditation and reading. Or if they were not answered according to logic, they would at least be solved according to feeling and faith, which were better. Her presence would remove the cause of our vain questionings, and allay the fruitless strivings of the mind. How the Gordian knot of Kant's metaphysics or Spencer's philosophy would be cut when we put out our arm and drew the golden head to our shoulder and felt the soft cheek against ours. Every pressure of hand in hand would be a disentanglement of eternal mysteries. Love, if we know how to interpret it, can answer every question Philosophy

ever asked. The mind weaves a net around itself from which it can be released only by the heart. Books can entertain; books can ask questions; but the riddles of life must be lived and loved out. She, sitting there, will be an encyclopaedia of the mysteries of human existence; and if she answers the questions of the soul with a smile or a kiss, does it not suffice? Is there aught more to be said?

For minor touches to the picture, completing its impression of solid comfort and genial surroundings, let a big dog be slumbering on the rug before the fire. Not a small dog or cat; not only do these lack dignity, but there is something about them which would not comport and harmonize well with the general tone of the room. A small dog always suggests smallness, whether it be of mind, purse or heart. The querulous little busy-body is out of place among the grander magnitudes. So, a cat would be an incongruity in the *tout ensemble*. A cat, some one has said, always hints of mice, fleas and jealousy. Tabby, therefore, were better ostracised with her unpleasant feline suggestiveness, while the large canine will be left to slumber on in his strength and majesty. Lying there by the hearth, he is nature tamed, but unreconstructed. He brings the stolid hardihood and the wild unbending individuality of the woods into the refined and artificial conventionalities of modern human life. There is a sturdy, unchangeable majesty of character about him, which will induce force and freshness of thought that is centered upon him.

Meantime, we will browse awhile among the books. Random reading, and rhapsodical writing—a nibble of Shakspeare here—a taste of Addison there—a bite of Spencer

over yonder, — now a hasty scribble of some illusory thought caught from the flash of the masters' genius; and then an intermission of fire-gazing and drifting on the tide of unrestricted thought. Next a little chat with Vesta, or perchance, some love-making. Such is an ideal way to spend the drear November days.

On dark days it seems most appropriate and most enjoyable to delve in the old authors. There is a fresh and racy flavor about them — a mellowness — which like rare old wine, we should reserve till we need it most when the sun is gone and the earth is bleak and cold. Rainy days are the holidays of the mind; at such times it is meet to get on a frolic with the old writers. And jolly good company they are, with their ruffs and small clothes, their periwigs and powder, their knee buckles and snuff boxes. And a ready sentiment they have for your mood no matter what it may be. If Herrick give us a lyric, we can stand the lack of sunshine; if Fielding or Richardson will tell a tale, we will not likely suffer with ennui; and even though the weather is forbidding, there is no reason why we should not go on a tramp through Arden Forest with Will Shakspeare. Or, perhaps, wheezy old Dr. Johnson will amuse us for awhile by scolding Boswell or satirizing every thing he can think of. If this weary us, and we find Arden Forest not to our taste, we might step into The Boar's Head Tavern and take a bumper or two of rich, old English ale from the hands of good Dame Quickly. Here, surely, there will be conviviality enough to put all pessimistic ideas to route; for Eastcheap, as old Stow says, "was always famous for its convivial doings. The cookes cried hot ribbes of beef

roasted, pies well baked, and other victuals; there was clattering of pewter pots, harpe, pipe, and sawtrie." "Corydon's Doleful Knell" may be appropriate after the effects of the ale wear off, and then what better than a stroll with dear old Izaak Walton, with rod and tackle, where, as Alex. Smith says, "the streams trot through the soft green meadows." When we have caught enough fish, Markham, with his "Country Contentments," may tell us what next to do, unless Carewor Suckling in their inimitable way will sing us an old-time ballad or melody. If these be not to our taste, Sir Thomas Cockayne's "Tretyse of Hunting" may take us further into the fields and woods with hawk and hound, or we might relish quaint old Peacham with his "Complete Gentleman," telling us the niceties of social etiquette and the proprieties of refined conduct in all matters relative to respectable living.

As the sun goes down the winds are lulled, the clouds break in the west, and the effulgent splendor of an autumn sunset glows red and golden behind the woods. It is like the last scene of a beautiful tableau: the rich but subdued lights illumine the cheerless landscape, magically transforming it into picturesque beauty. The gaunt trees stand out bold and rugged against the brightening sky with a rough but graphic grace. Draw the blinds: light the lamp: stir the fire, and put on another big log. Take down the books you love best, the abiding friends of the ages, and let the hours till bed-time be spent in the companionship of the Great. For the lingering charm of the long winter evening has come with the late November days.

MISTRESS CARRINGTON OF VIRGINIA.

The South lost millions of dollars by the abolition of slavery, but its greatest loss has been the passing away of those high and noble phases of southern life whose existence the institution of slavery made possible.

The war came as a fell blow upon southern life and customs, crushing, demolishing, changing forever. It swept away the conditions under which those types of southern chivalry, high, honorable manhood, true, refined, and cultured womanhood, generated, grew, and flourished. The war with its cannon balls and bullets, its fire, its blood, harvest of death, and devastation meant more than the freedom of the negro — more than the preservation of the Union ; it also marked the commencement of a period of painful and labored transition in a large part of the national life. It meant the advance and ultimate establishment of commercialism where formerly sentiments of chivalry, honor, high ideals, broad-hearted generosity, and gracious hospitality obtained ; it necessitated a change in a people's ideals ; an extinction of certain modes of their life, and an overthrow of their customs and traditions.

Under the institution of slavery, there grew up in certain portions of the South a form of aristocracy which in many aspects has been unequalled in the history of the world.



HAD TAKEN DOWN THE GUN OF HIS FOREFATHERS.

Far greater wealth there is, and has been — greater ease, greater luxury, greater pomp and ostentation. But for real gentility and elegance of living, genuine graciousness of heart and hospitality; for chivalry and gallantry; for refinement, polish and culture; for integrity of character, and for the sterling, unassuming virtues of home life, the antebellum South has probably never been excelled in the world, certainly not in America.

I remember it was in the latter fifties that I went to spend the Christmas with Colonel John Byrd Carrington at his home, Huntington Hall, on the Mattaponi river in tide-water Virginia. My father, Macon Cotesworth, whose name I bear, was a cotton planter of South Carolina, and he and the Colonel, while at the University of Virginia together, had been great friends and chums. My father always cherished a great love for his Alma Mater, and in his will he directed that I, when arrived at a proper age, should be sent there to complete my education. And my mother, upon whom fell the management of the estate, true to the wishes of her dear husband — and ever ready to indulge her children in all that was right — for I, too, from my early teens, was ambitious to become a student at that noble institution founded by Jefferson — as soon as I was of sufficient years, sent me to the University of Virginia.

Colonel Carrington, having seen my name in the catalogue, wrote to me, asking if I were not the son of his old friend of Clinton Mount in South Carolina. Upon my replying that I was, I received a most cordial letter from the Colonel, asking me that I spend the coming Christmas at his home; that the partridge shooting was excellent, and he

had two fine Irish setters; that the fall apple crop had been unusually good, and the annual output of apple brandy was greater in amount, and better in flavor than he had known it for years. Besides this, he said that he had a little house-keeper who could make very drinkable eggnog; that there was a likelihood of a pretty gay Christmas — that he didn't take the interest in such things that he did some thirty years back, — but he had heard rumors of several parties and frolics in the neighborhood; that there was a very good fiddler among his own negroes, and the floor of his main hall was always well waxed.

He also went on to say that one of the negro boys on the place had reported the discovery of a big bee-tree down in the river woods, and he had planned to cut down, and take it some day during the Christmas holidays. And everything being considered, he went on to say, he thought I might manage, if I were anything like the young men of his day, to amuse myself for awhile, and at the same time give him the pleasure of meeting and entertaining the son and namesake of his dearest old college friend.

I wrote to my mother enclosing the Colonel's letter, and asked her what I had better do. She replied that though it would be a great disappointment to her not to have me home Christmas; yet she thought if my dear father was living, that he would like above all things for me to meet his old friend, and go to his house; that she did not want to be selfish; and that as Colonel Carrington, she believed, was a lonely widower, it would be a great pleasure to him to have me at his house; and that if I wanted to, she thought I had better go.

My mother having written in this way, and the Colonel's hinted inducements being very much to my liking, it is needless to say that it did not take me long to decide what to do. Of course I regretted not seeing my mother at Christmas, but when one is twenty, the months have wings, and I knew the rest of the session would glide away, and it would not be long before commencement.

A day or two before Christmas, having packed my carpet bag, and said good-bye and a merry Christmas to the professors and all my friends, I went to the Charlottesville station and took the train for the Colonel's.

At the station all was bustle and confusion and jollity. Cheers, and good-byes, and halloos, and singing could be heard on all sides. Crowds of the students — the flower of the South — were going home for the holidays; and most of them, like myself, were in great spirits. There, among them, were sons of Louisiana sugar planters — tall, lithe, and handsome brunettes, their dark, expressive eyes, and general appearance bespeaking a strain of Creole blood in their veins. Some of them were accompanied by their negro body-servant, who, besides carrying his master's handbag and satchel, carried also, in several instances, I noticed, his guitar or banjo. There, too, were the young representatives of many stately mansions of the Georgia and Alabama cotton plantations; also sons of wealthy and aristocratic Virginia planters and tobacco growers; and even two tall, fair, big-limbed young giants from the far west blue grass regions of Kentucky. These latter I knew quite well, and they told me that a good part of the journey home they had to make in carriages; but they didn't mind

it as time was no matter to them, and they drove their thoroughbreds at a full gallop. They were fine manly fellows, never so much at home as when on a horse. Though somewhat rough, and not as cultured and polished as the more eastern students, they had a hardy independence, and certain straightforward freedom of speech and bearing that was quite as attractive. They were rather wild fellows, sticking together, and standing by each other, and had given the Faculty considerable trouble until one of them fell in love with Professor Rieves's daughter, and that seemed to soften and civilize him so he wouldn't join the other in his devilment; and thus their clique was broken up. I always thought that Clara Rieves liked him right well, too, and that she, fearing he might be expelled, exerted all her influence on him to tame him down. Still, I never was certain — one never could tell — Clara, like most of the University girls, was such a sly little coquette, she seemed to like everybody: she could pull the wool over a fellow's eyes in five minutes and make him think she liked him best of all on earth. There were probably fifty students in college who would have sworn to their last drop of blood that they were the fortunate possessor of Clara's heart.

These two young Kentuckians, true to the traditions of their native State, not infrequently indulged in strong potations, and though I cannot say from personal knowledge, as I kept company with carousers very little myself, and only then on special occasions — seldom taking anything but my gentlemanly julep, — it was reputed that they, after having imbibed more, could keep a clearer head and steadier gait than any of the students in college.

I shall never forget the spree they got on that night after the intermediate examination in Coke upon Littleton. They were both studying law — most of the Kentuckians did in those days — and they had been working hard, and keeping themselves close for some weeks previous, preparing for the examination. After it was all over, they thought it beholden to themselves to go in for a little relaxation, and they did to an extreme degree. Their room on West Range was their base of action, and there they collected a party of comrades with tastes and feelings congenial to their own, and organized what, in those days, was known as a Calathump; being nothing more than a body of masked students banded together in hilarious disorder for purposes of midnight mischief and orgies. Such bands were usually more or less under the influence of reverent liquors, and thus were actuated by motives of dare-devil glee and frolicsomeness. They were not uncommon in those days, these Calathumps, coming almost invariably after examinations, and being much dreaded by the professors. For it was not infrequent that these gangs forgot themselves as young gentlemen, and went too far in their boisterous, boyish mischief-making, and became very disorderly and riotous. Pistols and guns were sometimes fired on the ranges and lawns, and stones were thrown, to the often destruction of the University lamps, and the imperilment of life and limb, not only of the casual passer-by, but even of the revellers themselves. Jokes, more practical and provoking than humorous, were frequently committed. The poor old venerable University clock and bell being the never failing butts of these tricks when more favorable subjects did not present themselves.

They suffered most when through extreme maudlinness, or for other reasons, the frolickers were unimaginative. When minds worked well, there was generally something more original and better to do than to ring the bell, or steal its tongue, or to shoot at the clock, and take off its hands. Minds pregnant with genius and ideas, could devise and execute something more startling — more sensational. Then it would be that the Chairman's pet riding horse, in the dim hours of the night, would be taken from his stall, shaved, and painted blue. Or the fire pump might be brought from its house, and the hose having been applied, a professor's bell would be rung; and when that dignified personage in nightcap and dressing gown appeared at his door to see who was the midnight visitor, he would be greeted and probably knocked down by a powerful stream of ice-cold water.

On one occasion, a large number of bee hives belonging to an unpopular professor, had been brought, and broken open, and left at their owner's door; after the honey, with due care and a paint brush had been smeared all over the doorknob, the door, the veranda and a good part of the entire house front.

The bees, like their owner, were of a rather irascible nature, and the next morning, after their night of unrest and violation, were in no compromising mood, but swarmed in enraged multitudes around the Professor's house, vindictively attacking all that came near.

The students, at a safe distance, were watching and waiting for developments. The Professor was a little late at breakfast, and having finished, he hastily took up his book and notes, and started in a hurry for his classroom. With his mind

deeply immersed in the metaphysics of the day's lecture, he had opened and closed his front door, and was half-way across his porch before he realized the conditions, and before the angry insects made their presence known. Then the Professor, dropping his books and papers, made a frantic dash back to his door; but the latch had caught, and it was no time to ring the door-bell or use his key. So the Professor dashed out of the porch, clearing the steps at a bound, and rushed out on the lawn. There, for some moments, he executed a series of wild dances and gesticulations, slapping furiously at the bees; and finally, seeing the near-by basement door of Dr. Peyton's house open, he rushed madly through it, followed by a stream of bees, and burst in on the Peyton family at breakfast, frightening them very much indeed. For by this time, his face had become so purple and swollen that they did not recognize him, but thought it was some desperate crazy person intending them violence.

There was no lecture in metaphysics that day; and even the next day, while the Professor, making a brave effort, managed to occupy his accustomed chair, yet his face was still so blotched, puckered and swollen, that he very much resembled a clown, and he found great difficulty in maintaining in his class that order and dignity which is so necessary a prerequisite to the proper study of the worthy and learned science of metaphysics.

For several succeeding days the Professor and his family were in a most inconvenient state of practical quarantine, and could issue from their house only when well enveloped in mosquito netting. It was a source of much amusement to the heedless doers of this mischief to watch the grave

instructor coming out of his house all wrapped in veiling as a bride. The smell of the honey about the house attracted even the wild bees from the mountains, some of which latter, not being accustomed to persons and the ways of mankind, were disposed to be even more vicious than those that were partly domesticated, and they resented fiercely any interference of their business.

At last, as their numbers and the inconvenience they caused increased, a body of the University servants, well protected in netting, was sent to combat and drive them away with water and sulphur fumes. This expedient proved very effective. The honey was washed and scoured from the Professor's premises and the bees were driven away to return no more.

However, I believe I was going to talk about that big spree those two young scions of Kentucky got on. As I was saying, they organized a Calathump, and their first evil deed was to intercept and make drunk the University janitor who happened to be returning at a late hour from the performance of some of his duties. This janitor, Jefferson Martin, was quite a character — and a respected one — about the University in those days. He had one weakness, however, which was an uncontrollable love for strong drink. He had belonged to Thomas Jefferson, and was born on the Monticello Place. He remembered his old master very well, being in his teens when that great man died. We all knew him as Unc' Jeff, and would often get him to recount to us his recollections of Mr. Jefferson. He was very aristocratic in his ideas, and proud and dignified in his bearing; there was a certain native stateliness about him which commanded

respect, and which he had in common with so many of the old-time darkies.

To me, who was raised among, and knew so well the negroes of the old days before the war, and loved and respected many of them, it is a sad thing to contemplate the changes that have taken place in their characters and individuality since all the rights of freedom and full citizenship have been given them. I would not have slavery again; but as slaves, it seems to me, the negro occupied a sphere which was more in accordance with the preordained laws of the universe. He can never become as a white man — God and nature have decreed otherwise — and it seems to me that slavery, as I saw it, suited the nature of the negro, and he was happier under it than he has ever been since. His nature is that of a child,—careless, light-hearted, improvident. Under slavery, he was guarded, protected, supported, and treated as a child. My father never bought or sold a slave in his life, and it was very seldom he allowed one to be whipped except under such circumstances as he would have chastised his own son.

Very few of them are left now — these old-time types of darkey. We will find them here and there in isolated spots of the South. You will recognize him at sight; he haunts the plantations of his old masters; his head and beard are as white as cotton; he lives in his cabin with his helpmate, as ancient, as proud, as sterling and respectable as himself. In a shuck-bottom chair, he sits before his door in the sunshine, and smokes in a corncob pipe tobacco of his own growing, while he muses on the good old times. On the side of his cabin, there hang coon and rabbit skins and long strings of red pepper. There are pumpkins, beans, and

gourds in his little garden; and in the small plat before the house devoted to flowers, there are sunflowers and some old-fashioned rose and calacanthus bushes; some blue flags and purple zinnias. He probably has an ox, or, perhaps, a dilapidated old horse with which he works his small plantings and makes his meagre living. He believes firmly in ghosts and spirits, in "conjering," and in the efficacy of calamus root and various herbs and simples to cure sundry ailments of the flesh. If there is a church or college near, you may be sure he is the sexton of one, or the janitor of the other. Maybe, too, he does a little cobbling for the neighborhood or making of baskets and flagging of chairs.

When you speak to him he will address you as "Marsa" or "Misis," according to your sex. He has no use for the generation of negroes which has grown up since the war. He regards them as affected with the stigma that attached to the antebellum "free nigger."

"Dey ain't got no sense," he says, "and ain' fittin fur nothin' 'cept jail-birds. Dey gits er little edgycaction in de heads, and dey think dey know so much dey won't have to wuk. I ain't got no use fur 'em — dey ain't got no manners, and dey ain' 'spectable, and dey's lazy and good-fur-nothin', and you can't tell um nothin' 'cause dey think dey know it already."

Ask him if he has been happier since the war, and he will tell you: — "Naw, my Gawd, dat I ain't. Fo' de war, I had somebody to take keer me, and worry 'bout me, and now I have to take keer and worry 'bout myse'f. I didn't worry 'bout nothin' fo' de war; I had to wuk, but den I

knowed when de wuk was done, I was gwi' git plenty to eat, and dat Marsa was gwi' look af' me."

Well, as I was saying, the Calathumpers caught Unc' Jeff and beguiled him with their libations. Unc' Jeff would always demur a little to taking the first drink, as he was fully conscious of his weakness, but after the first, it was easier to get him to take a second, — still easier to take a third, and after the fourth, the demurring ceased altogether, and he became ready and willing, as long as he could stand, to take, like a rat-hole, all that was poured into him.

"Y'all ought not to 'tempt er ole nigger lek me," he would say, — "I's er daicon in de Chuch. De las' time you gin me some, you know I took a leetle too much, and some of de Elders talked 'bout turnin' me out of de Chuch fur backslidin'. I thanks you, young marsters, but de ole man don' b'lieve he'll take any to-night."

"All right, Unc' Jeff," the merry-makers would say, "we are very sorry you don't care for any, — we thought perhaps a little would do the old man good; but of course if you don't want any we won't insist."

Then he would have a protracted coughing spell. When he recovered his breath, he would say in a feeble voice: —

"I's much o'bleeged to y'all young marsters, (coughs) but I don' reggin I'll take any (coughs). Hit smell mighty good, doh, and I spec twould loosen up dis cough (coughs); and I had de misery in my side all day: I spec 'twould do dat good, too; and it always do hep my rheumatiz. If you jes po' me out a leetle tech un it — jes 'nough to loosen up dis cough, I b'lieve I'll try it."

I regret to say it, but it was a favorite thing for some of

the wilder students in college to do—this intoxicating of Uncle Jeff. There was some reason for it, for the old darkey was certainly very amusing and entertaining when partially inebriated; but of course this did not justify such scape-goat misdoings. Ordinarily, while sober, Uncle Jeff was dignified, not very talkative, very courteous, and rather philosophic. But give him drink, and he passed through a series of interesting changes of temperament. The students knew and recognized three distinct stages of his intoxication.

There was, first, the talkative stage, which he entered after three or four drinks, and which was very interesting to us students, as then he would tell us of the experiences of his early youth and young manhood, and of his recollections about Mr. Jefferson, and the old days at Montecello. He always apotheosized Mr. Jefferson, whom he ranked next to “Ole Marster in Hebben, de Lawd hissef.”

“Yas Lawd,” I remember hearing him say, “I done black Marse Tom’s shoes mo’ times dan I kin count—dat I is.”

Uncle Jeff’s next stage, after some half-dozen drinks, was the oratorical period. In this, he always manifested a tendency to get up on some high perch, and straighten up and throw his shoulders back. He had heard Henry Clay speak some years before in one of the presidential campaigns, and he was the exemplar of Uncle Jeff’s oratorical efforts.

“Ladies and gentmuns, len’ me yo’ yers,” he would say, which was generally as far as he got before he asked for another drink. “Hol’ on, gimme one mo’, and I’ll show you de way Marse Hinry Clay done. Marse Hinry, he

started out jes in dat way; he started out kinder quiet, soft and sweet lek, but in er little while, he riz up and got louder, an' hit 'peared lek dyar was suppin in him whar was gwi buss him open if he didn't let it out. But he riz higher, and he let it out so fas' and smooth and sweet lek, dat it come nearer to bustin de crowd open dan it did him. He put me in min' of er gre't barr'l of syrup 'lasses all bubblin an' bilin' over, gettin' hotter and mo' bubbly all de time, till its most singin' and you spec it every minute to bile clean over and sweep you 'way on er sweet roarin' flood. Yas, Lawd,—I didn't understan' much un it, but I could jes feel 'twas gran'. Dyar was suppin 'bout it dat made me feel kinder skeered and happy. Dyar was suppin in his viece dat sounded lek thunder and pretty music all mixed up togedder till you couldn't tell which was on top."

Having delivered himself of his afflatus of eloquence, if the drinks were still supplied, Uncle Jeff entered into his third stage of drunkenness. This was one of song and merriment—the highwater mark of his intoxication, before he lapsed into drowsy stupor. Now he would sing at the top of his voice all the old darkey songs and ballads which he had heard and learned in ehildhood. With a wild, though often not unmusical cadence, he would render the negro melodies of harvest and corn-shucking times, and occasionally, too, would give a weird chant such as they sang at negro revivals.

The singing would gradually subside, becoming less spirited, then broken and incoherent; finally ceasing altogether. Then he was ready to drop over anywhere; and

the students would take charge of him to see that he came to no hurt.

The young Kentuckians at the head of the Calathump, having put Uncle Jeff to bed, after seeing him through his several stages, next went and caught a cow, and tied her with a long rope to Professor Beverley's doorbell.

Professor Beverley was a fractious old bachelor of a very hasty temper, who in dealing with mischievous students, never knew how to exercise the smallest degree of tact or diplomacy; but when pranks were played on him, would fly off into a towering rage, which seldom did anything but make him ridiculous, and the students more disposed to practice their tricks on him.

He had been very much irritated and annoyed for some time past by having his doorbell rung at all hours of the night, and stones thrown at his house, and squalling cats tied to a pole and thrust up at his window. This sort of a thing had put him in a state of chronic ill-temper; and a few days since, after a night of perturbation, he had got up before his class in high dudgeon and told them that he had endured, and beseeched, and reproved long enough; that now he was going to *warn*. He told them that he had taken down from its rack in the hall the musket of his forefathers, and had loaded it with bird-shot; and intended to discharge it point-blank at the next midnight molester of his premises and disturber of his rest.

On the night of which we speak, the Professor being awakened by the spasmodic ringing of his bell, true to his word, and muttering imprecations against the whole race of students, shuffled out of bed, and took down his trusty

flintlock. Noiselessly, with gun in hand all cocked and primed, he stole through his hall, and opening the outer door peered out into the darkness. The bell hadn't rung since he got out of bed, but now as he stood there, on the alert for sight and sound such as would locate the target for his load, the innocent cow, peacefully grazing, again drew the rope taut, and the bell jingled. Gnashing his teeth in rage, and yet feeling exultant, now that he thought his vengeance would fall upon the wicked doers, the Professor put out his hand, and started to follow the rope. Crouching low, he stealthily crept on until he could just see the dark, unrecognizable figure of the cow moving before him. "Halt! or I'll fire," he shouted, but there was no reply. "Halt! who goes there? — speak, or I'll shoot," he said again. But still no answer. Meantime, the cow, hearing these savage tones, and seeing the nondescript figure approaching, became alarmed, and started to run, ringing the bell violently again. This apparent contempt and boldness was too much for the Professor, and, in great anger, he raised his gun, and fired. The shot took effect in the cow's flanks, wounding her severely, but not seriously. In her pain and fright she broke the rope and dashed away down the lawn and disappeared. Nor did the Professor know of his blunder until the next day, when a warrant was served on him by the owner of the cow for the willful and reckless shooting of his animal: and the frightful rage of the Professor was not lessened by the fact that the case went against him, and he had to pay the man a goodly sum in damages.

II.

Before I digressed, however, (we old men do so love to reminisce and ramble) I was saying that I took the train at Charlottesville for Colonel Carrington's depot, White Hall.

It was a gay lot on the train that day, and we had singing, and playing of the violin, banjo, and guitar, all the way down. Out through the beautiful foot-hills of Albermarle we sped, — the foot-hills that were now not so blue as usual, as snow to the depth of several inches lay on the ground. Then, on to the rich and fertile Piedmont section of Virginia.

At no station did we leave the people in doubt as to who was passing. We made noise enough to let all the countryside know that the University students were going home for Christmas. Of course, to one at my time of life, all that looks childish now, but I remember how I enjoyed it then: I remember how we flirted, and smiled, and threw kisses at all the pretty girls we saw at the wayside stations. And they took it well too, for everybody was in a holiday spirit, and would smile back and wave their kerchiefs at us.

Toward sundown, the train stopped at White Hall, and taking up my baggage, I bid adieu to those of my friends who were aboard the train, and stepped off.

I had barely gotten on the ground, when a very black young darkey came up, and removing his cap, and bowing low, said: —

“Is dis de young Marsa f'om de Vusity, whar's gwine to Marse John Carrington's?”

“Yes,” I answered, “I am Mr. Macon Cotesworth.”

“Dat’s de name, Marsa,” he said, “I fergot to ’member it, but dat’s de name. My name is Junius, and I’s Marse John’s kerredge driver, and I done come af’ you; hyah’s de kerredge with Buck and Nell, over hyah.”

He took my carpet bag, and conducted me to the vehicle, a cumbersome, but cosy rockaway or coach, which was in general use among the best Southern families in those days.

It was a drive of some ten miles to Huntington Hall, a good part of the way being in full sight of the meandering and picturesque Mattapony. Its snow-covered marshes and flocks of wild ducks, its wildernesses of purple gum trees, and its floating ice, were all objects of interest to me, who was accustomed to a more southern landscape.

Junius, with a little encouragement, proved very talkative, and narrated in his rough, but graphic, style, some very interesting episodes of his adventures as a ’coon and ’possum hunter. With a little leading, I got him to talk on spirits, and “evils,” and “Jack-mah-lanterns,” and of the various negro superstitions.

Wishing to know something more about my host, and the place I was visiting, I discreetly questioned him concerning the general life and habits of his master — whether he had any family, and so on.

“He ain’ got no fambly,” Junius said, “’ceptin he one daughter, Miss Anna, whar lives wid him, and do de house-keepin’. She’s a case too, Miss Anna is, she ain’t feered o’ nothin’, and kin manage anything f’om er wild horse, clean up to Marse John hissef.”

“Ah,” I thought to myself, “she must be the little housekeeper the Colonel wrote me of that could make the

good eggnog.” And aloud: — “She’s all the family the Colonel has, is she?”

“Yas, young Marsa, she is all. Ole Miss been died years ago, and Marse John got er housekeeper and er teacher fur Miss Anna fur awhile; but now she done growed so, he done let dem go, and Miss Anna do de housekeepin’, and Marse John he do teach her hissef. Some folks say dat dey spec Marse John was gwi’ git merried ergin; but my pappy, Zack, whar is de butler, he heered Marse John hissef tell Dr. Waller one day while dey was a-drinkin’ dyar juleps, dat he didn’t never spec to git merried long as he had Miss Anna wid him: dat he didn’t hev but one heart, and dat he had done gin dat to his chile wid all de love ’twould hol’; and he wanted her to keep it widout havin’ to ’vide it wid no stepmother. Miss Anna, she de very bref of life of Marse John.”

“How old is she, Junius?”

“Somewhargwine on eighteen or nineteen, I reggin, suh.”

“And pretty is she?”

“Lawd Marsa, dat she is — de prettiest thing you ever seed. She always put me in min’ of dat angel on de Christmas cyard whar Marse John gin Mammy. She’s jes lovely, — hit wouldn’t s’prise me to see de white wings come asproutin’ f’om her shoulders anytime. Naw, suh, dat ’twouldn’t. She got er face what look lek it ain’ never made up its min’ whether it gwi’ to be er snowdrap or er peach blossom; and her eyes is jes swimmin’ in glory.”

This was getting interesting; and I felt my heart beat a stroke or two faster as I heard this striking description of young Miss Carrington’s charms.

I found myself wondering if my shoes were well cleaned, and if the part in my hair had become obliterated during the careless trip down. I regretted that I had not put on my best silk stock, and my vest with the embroidered flowers on it.

The evening was cold; the snow lay white on the fields, and though in the road it had been trodden down and packed, as night fell, and the cold increased, it became slippery, and Junius had to exercise care in guiding Buck and Nell. They were well shod, but the crusty snow, and flinty ice in the small pools were apt to cut their ankles, making it necessary that we go at no great speed. The horses were spirited, but Junius seemed to have them under perfect control. He would speak to them as he would to a child, coaxing, reproving, and exhorting, and even appealing to their conscience and sense of reason.

"Now, Buck," he would say, "whyncher draw dat trace tighter? You know you ain' doin' yo' sheer; you lettin' Nell do mos' of de pullin'; you ought not to 'pose on wimmin folks lek dat — ain't you 'shamed of yo' sef. Hit's gittin' late, and Marse John will be waitin' supper, and gittin' uneasy 'bout us prezny."

In spite of my warm overcoat and the Colonel's buffalo robes, I was getting cold, and as we turned from the main road and rattled across a bridge, I was glad to see the lights of Huntington Hall gleaming some several hundred yards ahead.

The road into the farm was free from ice and snow, and the horses spurred up, and we covered the intervening distance at a lively gait, drawing up in a little while at the big

gate that opened into the lawn. Several small negroes, having heard us coming, had run out to open the gate, and in the darkness, we could make out their dim figures standing there.

As we drove up the hill, I saw the big hall door open; a dog barked; and there seemed to be some bustle; then several figures came out, some of them bearing lanterns. They came down the graveled walk to the yard gate, and met me as I stepped out.

It was Colonel Carrington and some of his servants. The Colonel came up to me, and pressing my hand warmly, gave me a most cordial greeting and welcome to his house. He put his hand on my shoulder, and we walked to the house together.

"I am so glad you have come," he said, "and it was so good of you. Your voice is exactly like your dear father's. Come into the light, and let me see if you look like him too."

He led me into the library and sitting-room, where in the wide fireplace a great ruddy fire of logs crackled and roared up the chimney, throwing a glorious warmth into the room. There were a big brass fender and andirons, warm rugs and great, cosy, easy-chairs, and a general aspect of sterling comfort about the room, which was enough to delight the heart of a chilled traveler.

"This is my little daughter, Anna," said the Colonel, presenting a beautiful young girl to me. She was standing poking the fire as we entered, and now came forward to greet us. I bowed with dignity, the young lady bowed too; and, then, as though on second thought, extended her hand

rather awkwardly, and I thought I saw the color deepen in her cheeks, but I was not sure.

I was surprised that the Colonel should introduce her as "my little daughter," for she was evidently but a year or two younger than myself, — and I thought that I was a very much grown-up man. But I found out afterwards that the Colonel had never realized that his daughter had become a young woman; and that he still looked upon her as a mere child.

We drew our chairs up before the fire:

"Get close, Macon," the Colonel said, "and warm your fingers and toes; the air is nipping and frosty to-night — only ten above zero by my thermometer out in the porch — and you must be cold. You must excuse me for calling you Macon, for I can't call the boy of my old chum, 'Mr.' Warm yourself good, boy, and presently we'll take a little apple brandy to warm the inner man. You need it after your long cold drive. My child," he continued, turning toward his daughter, "tell Zack to bring up the decanters out of the sideboard, and some glasses, and hot water, and sugar. It is mild, Macon," he said, turning again to me, — "very mild — just enough fire in it to drive Jack Frost out of your bones, and discomfit any incipient cold you may have taken during the drive. I suppose you are like the young University students of my day, and know how to handle the good things of life with gentlemanly discretion and temperance."

The old butler, Zack, came, in a little while, with the quaint cut glass decanters on a silver waiter. I noticed that the waiter and spoons bore the Carrington crest — a

mailed hand, a heart and an anchor, with its motto, *Manu forti: Virtute et fide*.

"This is Zack, my butler and factotum, Macon; he was my body-servant at the University, and knew your father," the Colonel said. "Zack," he went on, "this is Mr. Macon Cotesworth, son of my old friend. He's like his father, isn't he?"

Uncle Zack stopped, waiter in hand, and looked scrutinizingly at me.

"Lawd! Marse John," he said, — "dat he is — he 'nough lek he pa was to be his twin. I woulder knowed whose son he was anywhar."

He then put a small slender-legged table between us, and setting the waiter on it, went out. As he left, I heard him mutter to himself: — "Dat chile is sho lek he pa. Hit do me good to see 'im. I spec it mek Marse John feel young ergin to have him settin' dyar."

III.

That night after supper, the Colonel and I remained talking by the fire till the hands of the tall corner clock pointed to twelve.

Until about ten o'clock, Mistress Anna was with us, sitting near the candles, and working desultorily on some piece of fancy work. She said little, seldom speaking save when a question was addressed to her; but I noticed she seemed to be eagerly listening to our conversation. She seemed so modest that I felt some hesitancy in speaking to her, but I found myself looking askance at her frequently,

and the more I looked, the more I wanted to look. Yes, she was indeed pretty, and I could not help thinking how exceedingly appropriate was Junius's unique metaphor, when he said her face looked as though it had not decided whether it would be most like a snowdrop or a peach blossom. For its beauty and purity — its delicate coloring, and perfect symmetry were certainly suggestive of those flowers.

In a little while, I found myself talking disconnectedly, or listening perfunctorily and inattentively to the Colonel, while my thoughts, as though attracted by a magnet, would center on his daughter. She sat there with head bent over, and eyes on her needle work, totally unconscious of what a lovely picture she was, as the full light of the candle shone on her, lighting up her every beautiful feature, and lending the lustre of spun gold to her hair.

The Colonel, however, chatted on merrily, telling of his student days and hunting-trips, and never dreaming but that every particle of my attention and interest was his. I tried to keep up with him just enough to answer intelligently should he ask me a question; but as he asked very few, I felt safer, and soon was stealing more glances and letting my thoughts drift more and more towards Mistress Anna. Several times she caught me looking at her; and the first time, she unabashed, and openly returned my gaze, looking me frankly and squarely in the eye till I shifted my sight to the fire. The next time I looked toward her, I found her looking at me, but her eyes dropped at once to her sewing. Again in a little while, as I was looking at her, I saw her glance quickly at me, but seeing that I observed her, she

turned again at once to her work, and I thought I saw the peach blossom prevail in her cheeks.

I now most inconsiderately suffered myself to become oblivious to the Colonel's presence, as I could scarcely keep my eyes off Mistress Anna, and when not looking at her, I was gazing abstractedly into the fire and thinking of her.

Presently I became half conscious that the Colonel had started out to tell a joke. I had already discovered that the Colonel's jokes, while excellent, were long, and the listener was always carried on a circuitous route of details and preliminaries before he was brought to the climax and laughing point. So I thought I might safely let my mind drift away into the maze of soft thoughts which had already engendered, and come back in time to catch up the thread of the Colonel's anecdote, and laugh with him at the *dénouement*. Unfortunately, however, I made a blunder, and did not pay enough attention to the Colonel to meet the requirements of either courtesy or intelligence; for as the Colonel clapped his hands at some emphatic point in the narrative, it awakened me from my dream, and I, thinking that the point of the joke had been reached, laughed long and loud.

All was still after my untoward merriment had ceased; and I was conscious that I had made a mistake, and that the Colonel and his daughter were looking at me curiously; and I felt very much embarrassed.

Presently, my host tactfully took up and continued his anecdote. It was a long time yet before the amusing point was reached, and from what followed, I judged that my

mirth had been most unseemly, and had broken out just as the Colonel was telling a most pathetic part of the story.

I paid strict attention to him after this; but I noticed he looked closely at me several times, and asked if I were not sleepy after my all-day's journey. Once, too, he spoke of the apple brandy again, and asked if I thought it strong, and if I was easily affected by spirituous liquors.

Something after 10 o'clock, Mistress Anna laid aside her needlework and got up. As she did so, I heard her draw a deep breath, which I knew not whether to interpret as a small yawn or a big sigh. Then she came, and putting her arm around her father's neck, kissed him good-night. This lovely scene affected me deeply; and I wished with all my soul that I were in the Colonel's shoes for a few minutes. She next came and shook hands with me, bidding me good-night, and saying that she hoped I would find my room comfortable, and would sleep well. Then, taking up a candle, she went out, and I heard the patter of her dainty slippers as she mounted the stair.

When the clock struck twelve, the Colonel took me up to my room. After he had gone down, I sat a long while before my fire smoking and thinking. Then I undressed, and bounced into the great testered bed, that was as soft and white as a snow drift, and soon fell asleep.

That night I dreamed I wandered through a great beautiful garden where snow drops and peach blossoms were the principal flowers. There was one other who walked with me, and whose hand I held; and I thought the flowers all nodded and smiled to her. We walked to a great orange tree which stood in the middle of the garden, in full bloom.

And I thought there was a little pink Cupid up it, and he laughed when he saw us; and making a wreath of the flowering orange, he tossed it over my companion's head.

IV.

The next morning about break of day, I was awakened by a stamping outside of my door — someone was getting the snow off his feet. Then the door opened, and in the dim light, I saw the figure of Uncle Zack looming up dark and colossal. In one hand he carried a shovel-full of glowing coals, and the other pressed to his bosom a large bundle of resinous pine fagots, or "lightwood," as he called it. The red light from the fire-coals shone on his black, shiny face with its snowy beard, bringing it out in a strong, weird relief.

I heard him walk with a heavy tread to the fire-place — his native uncouthness, — big feet, and bigger shoes, making futile his tip-toeing and other endeavors to make as little noise as possible so as not to disturb me.

On reaching the fire-place, he uttered a characteristic groan as he stooped to his knees, and put down the fire and kindling.

"Ah Lawd," he mumbled, talking to himself, "dat rheumatiz in my back is wuss dis col' weather. Hit 'pear lek don' nothin' do it no good 'cept dat brandy whar Marse John gin me. Dat seem to loosen up de retchin right smart. Marse John says ole folks lek me and him ought to have a toddy every mornin'."

He commenced to 'blow the coals, and I could hear the

sputter of the resinous pine as it became ignited and blazed up, throwing a bright, flickering light into the room. Uncle Zack piled on more wood, and then seemed to be busying himself with sundry little attentions to the fire. He took up some of the ashes from the middle of the fire-place and shovelled them into the corners. Then he held his hands in the blaze to warm them; and finally, he turned up a nearby ottoman, and took a turkey wing from under it, and commenced to sweep up the hearth.

Meantime, he was groaning and mumbling to himself all the while: he seemed to be unconsciously thinking aloud. From what I could gather, I and the rheumatism and Colonel Carrington's brandy seemed to be the topics uppermost in his mind.

"Yas, — fine young gentmun," I heard him say, as he soliloquized in an undertone, — "jes lek he pa; — I spec he hear how pretty Miss Anna is and he done come to spark 'er. He'll be mekin love to her fus thing you know. He good 'nough fur 'er, doh, I reggin, and he wan't gwi pay no 'tention to 'er if he wan't neither. Naw, Lawd, — dey got to be de bes' blood in de lan' fo' dey come flyin' 'round Miss Anna. She don't want none of yo' ha'f strainers prancin' 'roun her; and I wan't gwi have it neither. Dey got to b'long to de ristocracks fo' I 'lows 'em to look at 'er. Ah, Lawd! dis rheumatiz is ter'ble dis mornin': — Nummin' — I spec Marse John gwi gimme er leetle dis mornin' — I lek to see young folks a-lovin' one 'ner. Miss Anna lek him right well already I do b'lieve. I see 'er look at him kinder shy las' night at de table, and den let her eyes drap real quick, and blesshed when she cotched him

lookin' at her. Yassir, I b'lieve she's kinder took wid him at de fus jump. Dey'd mek er handsome couple, too. Lawd, wouldn't she look pretty wid dem orange blooms and lace veils and things on! Marse John he never could mek up his min' to spyar 'er, doh. If she ever gits married, she got to live right hyar. Hit would kill Marse John to have 'er go 'way. He wouldn't gin 'er up not to let 'er marry er king; and he's right, too. I dunno what we'd do widout 'er. She's been de light of dis house ever since she could walk—ever since ole Miss died. And Marse John hissef wouldn't miss 'er no mo'n Unc' Zack would. Lawd, hit seems lek 'twan't no longer dan yistidy, when I used to tek 'er up in my arms and jump 'er, and tote 'er 'round. I 'member jes as well how she used to run about in dose little speckle gingham dresses wid her hair all floatin' 'bout jes as sparkly and bright as dis hyar tinsley stuff whar dey has on Chrismus trees. I knowed den she was gwi be de prettiest thing in de whole country when she growed up. Hit didn't tek no prophet to tell dat. Dem blue eyes of hers had mo' in 'em dan mos' chilluns. Dyar was always suppin bright and shiny 'bout 'er face whar put me in min' of sunshine on a rosebud.'

It is needless to say that I had been an eager listener to this random and rather incoherent monologue. Whether it was intended for my ears or not, I could not say. Judging from parenthetical clauses relative to the Colonel's brandy, I hardly thought it was; but if any self-accusations of eavesdropping had arisen in my mind, they were quickly disregarded when I heard the name of Anna spoken. In my eagerness to catch every word, I craned my neck until

it was exposed, and well from under the covering. This now brought on a fit of sneezing, which coming, as it did, at a most unwelcome time, told Uncle Zack that I was awake.

“Hi! Marse Macon,” he said, turning towards the bed, “is you ’wake? Didn’t know you was thinkin’ bout wakin’ yit. Hyar I been runnin’ on, and talkin’ to myse’f;—hope I ain’t ’sturb you?”

“No, Uncle Zack,—not at all; but is it time to get up?”

“Lawd, chile, no,—tu’n over and go ’long to sleep ergin. De roosters ain’ been long crow fur day. Marse John, he up—he always gits up early, but he ain’ had he toddy yit. And Sis Milly jes done put de brade on. Don’t you study ’bout gittin’ up yit. By de time you tek ernother nap de room will be nice and warm. I gwi put you er kettle of water on so hit’ll be hot when you’s ready to wash. Naw, chile, don’t you study ’bout gittin’ up yit, I jes gwine down to de spring to see if I kin fin’ some sprigs of mint fur Marse John. He giurally tek he julep widout de mint, but he ax me dis mornin’ if I didn’t reggin I could fin’ er leetle in de warm cornders under de leaves, whar de fros’ ain’ tech;—said he had a kinder hankerin’ fur de mint flavor, and dat he spec you’d enjoy er little mint julep yo’s’e’f fo’ breakfas’. Said he didn’t b’lieve in ’couragin’ young gentmuns to drink sperits, but dat dey ought to learn when dey is young how to handle it in er gentmunly way. He said dyar was er right way of usin’ things, and er wrong way, and if you learned er young man de right way fus, he

wan't in much danger of gittin' in de wrong way arter while.

"Well, I done run on and 'sturbed you 'nough now. Marse John 'll be hollerin' fur he mint prezny. Tu'n over and go 'long to sleep, Marse Macon: I gwi ring de risin' bell when hit's time to git up. And if you sleeps all day long hit don' mek no diffunce. Marse John says he always want his gueses to do jest what dey like to do, 'specially at Chrismus time. If dey'd ruther sleep, dey kin sleep till de cows come home, and hit don' mek no diffunce long as dey is pleasin' deyse'f."

With these parting words, Uncle Zack went out, and following his advice, I turned over and went to sleep till I was aroused about an hour later by the ringing of the rising bell.

I got up and dressed in my hunting suit and went down. I found the Colonel in the sitting-room before a great roaring fire of hickory logs. He was reading a volume of Plutarch's Lives, which he laid down as I came in, and getting up, shook my hand warmly.

"Good morning, Macon," he said, "I hope you slept well, and are feeling as fresh as a lark this morning. I thought you seemed a little tired last night; and no doubt you were. By-the-by, I suppose you named the corners last night? — four University girls of course. There are as many belles up there now as there were in my day, I am told. We have very charming women in Virginia, Macon."

"You have, indeed, sir," I stated with probably more emphasis and feeling than was expected, — "They can compare most favorably with our South Carolina girls."

V.

The two remaining days before Christmas glided rapidly away. The Colonel taking me over the house and farm, showing me very interesting things. There were legends and traditions connected with much of the old familiar silver and antique furniture, which the Colonel narrated with a zest and style that was highly entertaining. I was particularly interested in the collection of family portraits. There was a fine profile likeness of the Colonel himself taken as a youth. It was one of St. Memin's beautiful crayons, and was very handsome, there being something about the expression of the brow and eye which reminded me strongly of his daughter.

The Colonel and I also took a most enjoyable hunt. We went horseback, the Colonel saying, that while in his younger days, he often covered the farm afoot, but now, with increasing years, he had become stout and short of breath, and was unequal to a long tramp. A small black boy rode behind us on a mule to hold our horses when we got down to shoot.

The dog soon stood a covey on the edge of a broomsage field, and descending from our mounts, we walked into the birds. They rose all about us with a buzzing roar and boom that was most confusing. I, not being an experienced hunter or good marksman, blazed away at random, firing both barrels, but not bringing down a feather. The Colonel banged away and toppled over the first bird, but made a clean miss of the second.

"Pshaw! pshaw!" I heard him ejaculate as the noise

died away ; “ a bad miss — I should have gotten that second bird.”

The birds had scattered admirably along both sides of a ditch, and we were soon getting them up singly and in pairs, having great sport. I killed my next bird, but the Colonel missed his, discharging only one barrel.

“ Wait a minute, Macon,” he said, taking a flask of brandy from his pocket, after reloading, — “ I need a little something to steady my nerves and supple my limbs. Some years ago, I would not have taken it, but I find I can shoot better for it now. Old blood needs something to stimulate it to action.”

More birds got up, and I did wild shooting ; but the Colonel killed several consecutively, making some fine double shots. His good shooting continued in the main throughout the day. After every bad miss, I noticed he would take a swallow of brandy, and it appeared to be really of much assistance to him. My shooting amused the Colonel immensely, and for a long time afterwards, he would tease me about it.

Toward evening, while we were crossing a small belt of woods between two fields, the dogs flushed a flock of wild turkeys. One of them came flying past us at about seventy yards. The Colonel raised his gun with alacrity, and banged away, breaking the turkey’s wing. Then we had a wild chase of it. The bird dashed away for the thick cover, with lightning speed. The Colonel snapped his other barrel, but it hung fire, and did not go off. I shot but missed. Running after it, we called the dogs, and they trailed it for about half a mile. Finally, the bird, being exhausted by

loss of blood, was captured by the dogs, and we were soon up with them.

I was a gigantic gobbler, very fat; and had a beard, which the Colonel measured, and found it to be of seven inches length.

"Just in time for our Christmas dinner, to-morrow," said the Colonel, smiling in glorious good humor and satisfaction. Then we turned our horses homeward, being well pleased with our day's sport; having bagged twenty-five partridges and the turkey.

VI.

My host and hostess had invited a number of young people over to spend Christmas Eve with us, and that night we were up till a late hour, dancing, romping and playing games. There were some very lovely girls among them, too, I remember, but I did not think any the peer of Anna Carrington. Ah, I shall never forget how she looked that night in her gown of fluffy, dreamy pink with its low-cut neck and short sleeves. Can I ever forget the thrill I felt when I took her little hand in mine and danced those measures with her!

After supper, we had broken up in pairs mostly, some playing round games and cribbage, and others chatting. Then some of the girls went to the spinet, and played and sang. I got Mistress Anna off in a corner of the library. While sitting there talking with her, and looking into those beautiful eyes, I came very near telling her I loved her; for I was certain that I did now. And then I thought it

was too soon, a little premature, I had known her so short a while. She would not believe me; she might be frightened. And, yet, I could not realize that I had known her so little time. It seemed as though I had known her always, as I had known myself; that she was a part of me, and had been for all time.

Uncle Zack came in with his fiddle, in a little while, and the hall, having been cleared, he seated himself in a corner and called out, "Pardners fur de fus quadrille." He rosined his bow, tuned and plunked the strings for a time, and then, with such a heavy patting of the foot that the chandeliers shook and trembled in the ceiling, he struck up that good old tune, "Mollie Orchard," and the lines swept forward, swaying and turning gracefully in the joyous movements of the dance.

There was mistletoe hanging from the chandelier in the center of the hall, and the girls all made a great pretense of dodging from under it as they danced by. We kissed at them, and, as everybody was in gala Christmas spirits, perchance, some of the kisses landed, and were taken in no ill will.

The quadrille being over, Minnie Waller, a tall handsome brunette with flashing black eyes, and a stateliness of air and appearance which reminded one of an Assyrian queen, went and took her stand boldly under the mistletoe. "Now, who dares?" she said, looking on us in defiance. Several of the young beaux rushed forward, but on getting close to her, they seemed to be held at bay by her haughty bearing and flashing eyes. Gordon Roane, however, being bolder than the rest, went forward, and gave her a resound-

ing salute on the cheek. He was one of those jolly, dashing fellows who could do or say anything he pleased. He paid the penalty of his kiss; for before he could get away Miss Waller gave him a ringing box on the ear, and, amid much laughter, he retreated with a very red face to a corner.

Next came the Lancers, and I felt sick when I found that Gordon Roane had engaged Anna as his partner. I got another partner, but I fear I proved but a bore to her, paying her little heed, as my eyes and attention were fixed on another.

Gordon Roane was very good-looking and attractive, and he and Anna were old friends, and seemed to be on the most intimate terms. I know I must have looked green with jealousy as I watched him and her chatting together. There seemed to be secrets between them, too, and he would whisper something to her, and she would look up at him and smile in the most bewitching manner. There appeared to be a thorough understanding and congeniality between them, which almost drove me wild. I fear I had a look on my face and a thought in my heart which was most uncharitable to Roane.

After the Lancers, I rushed up to them, and engaged Anna for the waltz that followed. There was a little intermission before the waltz, Uncle Zack taking time to catch his breath and gulp down a big mug of eggnog. Meantime Anna and young Roane promenaded arm in arm out of the hall, and went into the sitting-room. There, when the waltz commenced, I pounced upon them like a savage, and claimed my partner. I found them sitting on a sofa in a corner by

themselves, and seemingly oblivious to all else but their own society. She said she was a little tired, and that her slipper cramped her foot, and asked if I would not please excuse her from the engagement. "Yes," I said curtly and coldly, — for there was nothing else I could say, — and whirled around and walked away. I went and got another partner, and entered mechanically into the waltz. One moment I would feel raging, and another, all crushed and despondent. I could do nothing, though, and I concealed my feelings, and acted my part in the festivities as best I could. In a little while I saw that she had come in, and was waltzing with Roane in spite of her fatigue and tight shoe.

During the dancing the Colonel came in for a short time, and, selecting a fair and charming partner, danced a lively measure or so. He seemed to enjoy it greatly, but puffed mightily at the end, taking a chair in the doorway where he could look on, and saying that for the rest of the evening he thought it more expedient that he join in the gaieties in spirit and not in person; that the years had stoutened and stiffened his body, but his heart was as young as ever. He sat and watched us for quite awhile, his face beaming, and a great beaker of eggnog in his hand.

I paid no more attention to Mistress Anna that night, and would not even look at her. The company left at a late hour, the Colonel telling them as they went out that he feared if they had stayed up much later they would have kept Santa Claus from coming, and he would not have filled his little Anna's stocking.

The next day was Christmas, and we spent it, as was customary in those days in the South, in a semi-religious way,

making it a day of quiet peace, joy and good-will. The Colonel spent the morning in distributing presents among his negroes, and there was none that he forgot, giving even the little black pickaninny that was but a week old some nice warm frocks of flannel.

I will always remember the Christmas dinner. We had no guests — there was none but the Colonel, his daughter and myself. Every face on Huntington Hall farm was radiant that day, — even my own, for I would not suffer my last night's discomfiture to give me a long face, and make me as a skeleton at the feast. I assumed a cheerful countenance; Mistress Carrington was all smiles, and seemed to have no recollection of the last night's happenings; and the Colonel's jovial face fairly shone with good-will and kindness.

After the Colonel had said grace, we sat down at the table which was all a-sparkle with the family silver and cut glass. The Colonel raised the glittering carving knife and fork, and tackled our big turkey with a vim and gusto that was pleasant to see. It was a most delicious bird — fat, and well cooked, with an abundance of rich gravy seasoned in the most palatable mode. With its cranberry sauce, I enjoyed that turkey to the fullest extent; for love, I am thankful to say, never did affect my appetite.

There was on the table a bottle of rare, old *Mèdoc* of the *Chateau Margaux* variety, I think, the Colonel told me, if I remember correctly. He also said that this wine had been in the family for generations, and was always honored by a separate clause in the family wills; that it had been brought over from *Bordeaux* about the middle of the

eighteenth century on board one of his great-grandfather's trading ships. He said that it had been a custom in the family to drink this wine only on Christmas Day, and that there were only a few bottles left now.

I am by no means a connoisseur of wines, but I can say that I have never tasted a vintage in which smoothness, fire, and delicious delicacy of bouquet were so happily blended as they were in this old Mèdoc. We sipped it leisurely, Miss Carrington taking only half a glass, and the Colonel telling some capital jokes between the sips of wine and big mouthfuls of turkey.

After dinner, Uncle Zack was given a taste of the wine, the Colonel telling him its age and history, and asking his opinion of it. Uncle Zack tasted it, and smacked his lips gravely: "Gawd A'mighty, Marse John," he said, "hit sho is curious; dyar's suppin in it whar min' me of Hebben, and dyar's suppin in it whar min' me of de yuther place. Hit got fire and aidge to it, but den it got suppin soothin', and sweet, and restful lek in it too."

Christmas night, we had no company, neither did we go out. The Colonel and I played backgammon and chess, and Anna read Moore's Poems. Later, she and I played cribbage while the Colonel smoked his pipe. Again, I was on the point of saying something tender to her, but I restrained myself, being still somewhat resentful at her treatment of me the night before. She had never offered any explanation as to why she had behaved so; nor did I mention it, as it was an unpleasant subject to me.

The next night Mistress Anna and myself were invited out to Dr. Waller's to a big party. Dr. Waller had a noble

old mansion about five miles from Huntington Hall; and about sundown, we started in the carriage, Uncle Zack acting as driver and chaperon.

Mistress Anna was quite gracious during the drive, and very talkative for her. She prattled away, and told me all about the beautiful furs she wore, which, she said, had been prepared from the skins of red foxes that her father had caught in the chase. She was experienced at fox hunting herself, she told me, and had not infrequently been a brush winner.

When we got to Dr. Waller's, the house was filled with a gay and fair company. There was a whole band of darkey musicians; the big rooms were all thrown open; the floors were waxed till they glistened like mirrors; and big bunches of holly and mistletoe were throughout the house.

Radiant with the pleasurable excitement of the evening, Anna looked more lovely than I had ever seen her. She was a great belle that evening, but I got all the dances with her I could. In one of the waltzes I had with her, the floor was crowded with many couples, and I had to hold her close and firmly in order to guide in the throng of dancers. There was the little golden head against my shoulder; there was the little velvety hand in mine; and I don't suppose I should have done it, but I could not help it: — as we passed under the mistletoe, which hung from the swinging lamp, I bowed my head and kissed her on the brow. She started to break from me, but just then the music stopped, and supper was announced. Then I could hold myself in no longer, and blurted it out as best I could: "Anna," I

whispered as I offered her my arm, "I love you, and I could not help it."

She was very solemn going back that night. The moon was shining brightly. Uncle Zack was sitting on the front seat intermittently humming some dolorous darkey dirge, and clucking to the horses. He was not in as gloomy a mood as his song would indicate, for Dr. Waller had given him brandy enough to lighten his heart without making him dangerous as a driver.

I started to talk on various topics, but found it up-hill work, as Anna was not at all responsive. After a long pause, I stole my hand into her muff, gently catching her hand. She withdrew it quickly. "Did you hear what I told you to-night?" I asked her. "Yes," she answered, "but I don't wish to talk of it. Say no more about it—not now."

VII.

The next day we slept late; and the day following, we went fox hunting. Notwithstanding his advanced years, the Colonel was still an excellent rider, sitting a horse most nobly, and was very fond of the chase. We had fine mounts, and a good pack of hounds; and a company of the neighbors helped to make up the party. The Colonel blew his great buffalo horn till it re-echoed resonantly from the distant forests and hills; and we cantered off merrily. The day was bright and bracing—well-fitted for outdoor sport.

I rode by Mistress Anna's side. She appeared to great

advantage in her tight-fitting riding habit of dark green, and sat firmly and gracefully on her big bay horse.

It was not long before a fox was gotten up, and we dashed across a field at a furious gallop to follow the dogs. I was no novice at riding, and I found no difficulty in keeping pace with the others. We cleared several low fences and some ditches, and then swept down a great level field half a mile across. Anna and I were still side by side, and it was a great pleasure to me to see the ease and fearlessness with which she cleared the fences. As we rode along, she taunted me with much good-natured badinage as to how she was going to beat me and win the brush.

At the end of the field there was a high rail fence, something over five feet, I should judge. Still going at a full gallop, we swept down upon it. One after another the riders cleared it. Anna and I were about the middle of the party: some yards from the fence, we turned our horses' heads a little and each aimed for a separate panel.

Our horses rose in the air. I remember having my eyes on Anna, as, like a lithe sapling in a storm, she swayed with the motion of the leaping horse. I remember my horse alighting heavily, and stumbling; and then all was dark.

VIII.

When I came to myself I was in bed at Huntington Hall. The Colonel and Dr. Waller with grave faces were sitting by me. They looked at me as I moved, and smiled kindly as they saw that I recognized them. I tried to speak, but felt great pain in my side. I was also aware that my head

was bandaged up. And there was a smell of various medicines in the room.

After attempting to collect my thoughts for awhile, I finally managed to feebly ask what had happened. Dr. Waller answered in his gentle, genial way, evidently trying to make light of the matter.

“Nothing much is the matter, my boy,” he said, “only you had an accident; your horse fell and threw you against a stump. Lie quiet, and don’t talk, and you will soon be all right.”

Well, I had a long spell of it — was on my back for four weeks. Three ribs had been broken, besides, I had a narrow escape from brain fever. But my mother came in a few days, and I had her with me, and Anna.

IX.

One afternoon, during my convalescence, I was lying on the couch in the library, in my dressing gown. My mother was in the next room, and Anna was sitting by, reading to me. She had read to me much during my illness, and in the capacity of the sweetest little nurse in the world, had endeared herself to me more than words could express.

It was a love story she had been reading; but the short winter twilight had fallen, making it too dark to read, and she now stopped and laid the book in her lap, just as the lovers in the story, after many trials, seemed about to realize their felicity. She laid the book in her lap, and was sitting there still and silent. I had been listening with closed eyes,

but Inow opened them, and looked on her as she sat there in the dim red and golden glow of the winter's sunset.

I held out my hand to her — I was still very weak — “Anna,” I called.

She came to my side and I took her hand: “Anna,” I said, “it is too dark to finish reading the story; let us act out the end. Can I speak of it now? Do you love me?”

She did not answer, but pressed my hand, and then bent over and kissed me. That was all. That was enough. I said no more, but lay back and was happy.

X.

After I was getting well and strong, my mother returned home, and I was to go back to the University in a few days.

A day or two before I left, I was sitting one morning in the library with the Colonel, and I thought the time had come for me to speak to him of it.

“Colonel,” I said, laying down my book, and jumping in without introduction or formality, “I love your daughter, and I want to marry her.”

The Colonel sprang up as though off a pin, and thrusting his hands in his pockets, stood looking over at me with an expression on his face that seemed to say he doubted the testimony of his senses.

“Want to marry my daughter! What daughter? my little Anna?” he presently broke out.

“Yes, sir.”

“Macon, are you mad?”

“No, sir; but I love her, and she loves me, and I want to marry her.”

“You — love — her! — and she — loves — you! — and you want to marry her!” exclaimed the Colonel with a slow, broken emphasis which expressed very plainly that he was nearly dumfounded with surprise. “What is that I hear?” he continued; “why, boy, she is nothing but a child — a mere child. She doesn’t know what love is, except her love for me. Marry her! Nonsense! I will call her, and see what all this means. I hope you haven’t been putting silly ideas in my child’s head while enjoying the hospitality of my roof? Wait a moment — I’ll call her, and look into this business.”

I jumped before the door, and remonstrated with the Colonel; and catching his hand begged him not to do it — not to bring her in, and embarrass, and perhaps frighten her; that he might see her privately, and talk with me privately, and investigate the matter; but that he ought not thus suddenly to make a public exhibition, as it were, of our most sacred and shrinking thoughts and emotions.

But the Colonel paid no heed to my entreaties, and brushed me aside.

“She’s my child, sir,” he said, “and I’ll do as I please, and brook no interference. I’m master of my house and family, and don’t wish to be dictated to.”

I saw the Colonel’s temper was rising, so I discreetly desisted, taking my seat, and awaiting the outcome with what calmness I could.

I heard him go out into the hall calling Anna; and in a little while he came back leading her by the hand. She

looked pale and frightened — the little angel — she didn't know what was to pay, and I half believe she thought we were going to be married summarily then and there, or that the Colonel was going to give us both a flogging. She glanced at me, and I think my assumed look of dare-devil dignity and composure reassured her somewhat.

The Colonel, however, gave her short time for speculating as to what his intentions were. He made his purpose known at once. Having closed the door, he motioned Anna to a seat; then strode up to the fire, and wheeled about and faced us.

“Anna,” he said, “has Macon been talking to you about love?”

She blushed deeply, then gave a timid glance at me which it was easy to interpret as a mute, piteous appeal for some sign as to how she should answer. The poor little dear didn't know what to do, or what to say. She knew so little of love, so little of life and the world, that she knew not whether love were a crime or not. It was a cruel question, I thought, — it was terrible to thus come down in one fell swoop upon her tender, sensitive feelings of maiden modesty. I could hardly control myself. Rash thoughts rushed through my mind. I started to get up, and take her in my arms and defy the Colonel. It was too heartless — too cruel to do her this way. I shall never forget how she looked as she sat there in the awful silence pending her answer to that question. Again, she looked at me, and I nodded. In the meanwhile, the Colonel, with a serious expression of unfathomable meaning on his face, was looking at her, awaiting her reply.

Then the answer came: — “ Yes, sir,” she said in a firm voice; but there was a suggestion of tears back of it.

The Colonel cleared his throat, and all was still again. I half expected him to collar me and kick me out of the house.

“ Well,” said the Colonel after a brief pause, “ come, my child — out with it — let us have it — tell me all about it. I’m your father, and must know. Macon says that you love him, and that you all want to get married. Is that so? ”

The tears had come now, the brave little heroine could hold them in no longer. I saw two big ones come rolling down her cheeks, and the long lashes were all wet and heavy.

“ Yes, sir,” she sobbed.

Then I could restrain myself no longer. I jumped up, and ran and caught her in my arms, and kissed the little pale face all wet with tears. Her bravery was all gone now: she was completely overcome; and she rested her head on my shoulder, and sobbed aloud. I glanced up at the Colonel. I saw him quickly turn his head away, and wipe his eyes, and then he commenced to pace the floor quickly up and down.

After a little while, he stopped, and came and drew up a chair by us, and put his arm around his daughter.

“ And you love him, Anna? ” he asked.

“ Yes, sir,” she sobbed again, and then transferred her head from my shoulder to her father’s. The Colonel held her close, and looked very grave.

“ Macon,” he said, “ I cannot give her up, I cannot

think of it. Would you take away my one joy — my one prop that keeps me from tumbling in the grave? ”

“ No, sir ; I would not,” I answered, scarcely knowing what I said, or what I thought.

“ And yet,” continued the Colonel, as though he had not heard me, “ the work is done now and cannot be helped. A new element has entered into her life. I at last realize that she is a young woman, and that henceforward there will have to be something else besides her old father to make her life complete and happy. It is done now, Macon, and I will resign myself to the inevitable laws. You have awakened the strongest force of her nature, and she will never be happy without you. Take her, my son, and God bless you both.”

XI.

In a few days I returned to the University. I applied myself to my studies with an ardor and resolution which knew no defeat. The professors were kind enough to give me some special examinations, and in spite of my long illness, when the degrees were conferred the following summer, I was counted among the elect, and walked up and took mine too.

Early in the fall, Anna and I were married, my mother and many friends coming on to the wedding. After some days of festivity at Huntington Hall, I took my wife to our home, Clinton Mount, and the Colonel went with us. It had been decided that he was to spend six months of the year with us at Clinton Mount, and the other six months, we were to spend with him at Huntington Hall.

One afternoon, some two months after we had settled at Clinton Mount, my mother and the Colonel came in from a drive to the Post Office. Both Anna and I noticed that they seemed to be in a gale of good spirits. Before they got to the house, we heard them laughing and talking like two school children. All that evening, they were as gay as you please. My mother laughing and teasing, and the Colonel making heavy drafts on his inexhaustible fund of jokes. It was all easily explicable the next morning when they called us into the parlor, and after closing the door, and drawing the blinds most mysteriously, announced to us in whispers barely audible, that they were engaged, and were to be married in a very short time.



"CAME UPON LAURA DIGGING VIOLETS."

AFTER ALL.

I.

It was a few days before Christmas, and John Ardslye was shut up in his room at college. Outside he could hear the shouts of his fellow-collegians; — the football team had been victorious that day — but John paid little attention to the fuss. John was in love — there is no doubt about it — and he was writing a letter to send along with the present he had gotten for his sweetheart. Thrilled with the afflatus of his passion, he wrote: —

“What shall I give you in return for what you have given me — you who have given me your pure maiden love, your heart, your little self: you who have given me faith in life, faith in love, faith in God: you who have made the flowers fairer, the birds’ songs more sweet, the sunshine brighter: who have glorified work, and clothed it with gladness — shod the long hours with the fleetness of joy: who, with a look, have transformed my sordid selfishness into charity: whose eyes have illumed even the heavy shadows which hang about the grave, and made the star of hope to shine in the dark valley of the tomb: — who have answered for me those ancient, troublous questions, Why? Whence? Where? and solved their riddle with the single word — Love.

“And these words are written for you, my little darling — for you who have loved, and not for the unthinking and flippant; — not for the idler, the skeptic, the cynic, the faithless, but for you who have known love’s paradoxical mysteries, its pride and humility,

its weakness and power, its faith and doubt, its splendid agony, its terrible joy."

Yes, John was in love; there was no doubt of it.

Several times the current of his thoughts was interrupted by bangs on his door as some of the exulting students went by, wondering if he were in. But John gave no sign to disclose his whereabouts until the letter was finished and sealed. Then, slipping it into his pocket with the present, he went out to post them. Crossing the campus, he encountered a straggling, laughing and shouting group of the football players. They were in great glee, the exhilaration of victory having been supplemented by that of punch which had been served them in large quantities by proud admirers, immediately after the game.

"Hello, Ardslye," they called, "where've you been? Why aren't you celebrating?"

Some of them caught his hat—for John was popular, and knew them all well—and waved it in the air; others slapped him on the shoulder, and the big center rush grabbed his hand, and shook it so violently that the letter and present fell from John's pocket.

"Hello, what have we here!" said the center rush, stooping and picking them up. "Aha," he continued, as he read the addresses,—"I see—Miss Laura Lane—what are you sending her, Johnnie, my boy? Sweet, is she? and pretty of course? Got it bad, have you? Say, fellows, here's fun in a nut shell; we must read this letter and see this present, even if they don't get to her in time to go in her stocking. What do you say about it, John? Don't you think you can give us a set-up to a banquet of your mental

sweets and bonbons after we've won such a victory for you to-day? "

John got very red, and made several futile attempts to snatch the letter and parcel, but they were held high over the head of the big center rush where he could not reach them.

By reason of his great size and strength, and great good humor, the center rush was usually a privileged person to do and say what he pleased without question. The merry crowd now stood watching him, and enjoying the joke at the expense of the discomfited Ardslye.

"Here goes, then, — silence gives consent," said the center rush, tearing open the letter: "hush now, fellows, while I read it; and you had better take lessons from it, because some of you might be in John's fix some day, and then you'd have a good recipe for the making of a sentimental pudding of sweet nonentities. Here she goes, then: — 'My dearest Laura.' "

He got no farther; for at this moment John broke away from the two men who had been delegated to hold him, and rushing forward struck the center rush in the face, throwing his entire weight and strength into the blow.

John was of good size, strong, and athletic himself, and his blow coming unexpectedly as it did, and squarely between the eyes, felled the center rush to the ground.

There was a general commotion, during which John seized and pocketed his letter and parcel. In a moment the center rush was sitting up, and looking around, still somewhat dazed. John was advised to flee before the giant recovered himself; but he stood his ground.

Then, as his mind cleared, the center rush got up and walked over to John, who stood, pale, but looking him unflinchingly in the eye. Every one expected one knock-out blow for John, but they were mistaken. The center rush grasped his hand and shook it.

“That was a good one you gave me,” he said, “and you were right. I was a little too gay, and went too far; but you’ve sobered me up now. I didn’t know it was such a serious thing either — thought maybe it was just a little flirtation, and that you wouldn’t mind it much, and would take it good-humoredly, considering we are all out for a lark. But I see now I made a mistake, and am glad I got hauled up for it. Come on and join our party. It’s all right now, isn’t it, Ardslye, old man?”

“O, yes,” John answered, “it’s all right now; let’s forget it. Go ahead — I’ll have to run back and get another envelope, but I’ll overtake you in a minute.”

“I’m glad he read no further,” John thought to himself, as he ran back to his room, and again put the letter in a condition to be mailed, — “yes, as he said, it is a serious thing — I love her; she loves me; and for her sake I would fear to do nothing.”

II.

John Ardslye was at this time a young man in his twenty-first year. He had spent most of his life before going to college at his father’s country home, and, though clever, his knowledge of the world was neither broad nor acute. His father was a practical man of modest means, good birth

and breeding, and with high hopes of the future career of his only child John.

There was a man named Lane living as a tenant on Mr. Ardslye's farm, with his family consisting of wife and daughter. This daughter, Laura, had been the chief companion and playmate of John's childhood and youth; and she it was to whom the letter was addressed.

As John and Laura grew up together it was natural that love should have developed between them. When children, they had spent days together roaming in the woods; gathering wild flowers; sharing each other's lunch; wading in the brook, and catching the silvered minnows with pin and worm.

Time passed, and John sprang up into a tall, dark-eyed, handsome youth, and Laura into a lithe, graceful maiden of the blonde type, having big blue eyes, full of intelligence, but with a child-like, confiding, innocency of expression. Then they read and talked together as two children of nature. John, being two years her senior, had much influence in the molding of Laura's character. He was fond of books, and she became fond of them too. He had notions of lofty ideals, and in a way they were impressed upon her. She became superior to her blood and raising — her parents were of plain, unrefined origin — in instincts and culture. As she grew older her character became one of simple strength, gentle confidence, and unsophisticated intelligence; and, when the dawn of love shot its glorious radiance through her soul, she believed that it was all in all — the breath, the motive, the mission of life.

John, being well up in the teens, his father had sent him

off to college. Mr. Ardslye had noticed the relations existing between John and Laura, but deemed it nothing of moment. "Puppy love," he called it, and thought that when his son left for college that would be the last of it. But returning in the summer, and for several consecutive summers, John found that the separation instead of lessening, had made stronger and deeper his love for Laura.

So it was that the summer of his graduation — the summer next after the fight with the center rush — young Ardslye again returned home. He found Laura had grown more beautiful since he saw her last, and he speedily renewed his fond association with her. Often would he and she meet in the orchard between their homes, and there read and talk through the long summer days. Each was now more or less timid in the other's presence: their love was so great they feared it, and felt awed.

After some weeks, John being determined on marriage, spoke to his father of it. He had delayed this as long as possible, as he knew his sire would not be likely to tolerate such an idea. Still it had to be done, as John was penniless, and had no start in the world, and without the parental sanction, mad in love as he was, he saw that marriage was well-nigh an impossibility.

They were sitting in the library reading, one night, and John laid down his book, and said: —

"Father, Laura and I want to get married right away."

Mr. Ardslye put down his paper at once, and looked at John over his glasses, raising his eyebrows, and stretching his eyes, but saying nothing.

"Yes, Father, you know how we love each other."

“Gracious me! Mercy on us! has it come to that, my son?” said Mr. Ardslye in a tone expressive of ridicule and disgust. “Well, well,” he continued, “this comes as a shock and surprise, indeed — I had a better opinion of your intelligence, my son, than to ever think you would dream of taking such a step. I knew, it is true, that you were somewhat infatuated with the girl, but the possibility of your ever wishing to marry her never occurred to me. What’s the matter with you — are you speaking seriously? Or have you gone crazy?”

“No, but I love her, and I’m going to marry her.”

“Pshaw! Nonsense! You are too old, and have too much sense to talk like that. I suppose you want to degrade yourself and me — to give up all your chances in life of making something of yourself — you want to be a nin-compoop — the victim of a silly, boyish passion, and tie yourself irretrievably, body and soul, to that plain, simple, and designing daughter of a bumpkin, do you? I’d have more pride — more self-respect, my son, than to be taken in and gulled, and blinded in such a manner.”

“Yes, but I love her, and she loves me: is not love worth it all — is it not the best in life? Were I to become a king by losing her, I would not feel repaid; I would not be happy.”

“Love — love — nothing but love: that everlasting tommyrot of young people: that’s the matter with you. What a pity we cannot inoculate against it — what a pity we have no virus to make young innocents immune to the pest, to this mental contagion and infection called love. Or if they must have it, there should be an asylum or pest house

where all afflicted with the epidemic should be quarantined, and have drastic treatment till they are cured of their aberrations.

“My son, love is a malady which, like measles and whooping cough, youth is peculiarly subject to. As Diogenes said, it is fit business for an idle person. It is a luxury, a folly, a dissipation, a delusion which men with the work of the world on their shoulders cannot afford to indulge in. Leave it to children, and idle, sentimental women. It is a deception which nature practices on the young and unwary — a mild form of madness which, in this age of reason and practicality, should be ruled out of our thoughts, eschewed and ridiculed. I know what it is. I speak from experience. I had the disease myself when I was your age. Thank Heaven I did not plunge blindly in, as you wish to do, and blight all my prospects chasing that will-o'-wisp called Cupid. Love is a plant which grows rankly and waywardly in the soil of young, inexperienced minds: it is not a perennial — not even an annual; it lasts for but a moon, and that the honey-moon.

“Your mother and I get along very well together — better than most couples, I warrant: we have little spats occasionally, but nothing of a serious nature; and yet our union was not what one would term a love match. Don't understand me to say that our marriage was altogether one of policy — far from it. We respected, trusted, even admired each other before marriage; but what I mean to say is that we did not labor under that unfortunate and illusory state which you are now in, and which bears the respectable name of love, but should be called juvenile insanity. After

marriage, being in circumstances which necessitated little friction of the domestic and economic machinery, our mutual admiration and respect increased from day to day, and a more sensible, more real, and more stable affection and regard gradually grew up between us; and to-day we are comfortable and contented while many of the actors in a love-marriage-drama, or rather, tragedy, whom I might name, are suing for divorces, or, what is more deplorable, living together in mutual unhappiness.

“ Yes, my son, take my advice, and let love be the last thing you marry for. A man can’t make a sensible match when he is in love, unless he does it by chance. And the result of matrimony, my boy, is too serious a thing to be left to the vagaries of chance. If you happen to be in love with a woman who will make you a desirable wife, it is all very well — no harm can come of it; but for gracious’ sake don’t marry *because* of that love. If you find yourself in love, immediately become alarmed — consider yourself a monomaniac, a person *non compos mentis* as regards your inamorata and any possible alliance with her. Consult your friends true and tried, taking care that they be not likewise afflicted with your distemper, and if they, seeing things in a reasonable light, think the match expedient — then congratulate yourself, and go ahead and marry her if you can. The love may make things pleasanter for a month or two, if it doesn’t make a simpering fool of you, as I have known it to do with many a callow young man. Love is an excellent sauce for the brief banquet of the honey-moon, but for the many matter-of-fact dinners of after life which we all must eat, take reason, my boy, take reason and practical

common sense, and you will find them in the long run much safer and more wholesome condiments in the matrimonial cuisine."

"O, you can never have loved, Father, or you couldn't talk in that cold, calculating, unfeeling way: you have never loved as I do now, when my whole being cries out, and bears witness that love is the highest end of life. You never have known it in its true, pure, and noble inspiration, if you can talk like that."

"Tut, tut, bosh and fiddlesticks! Poor fellow! — you have it bad — you have a typical case — every symptom, — reason gone, delirium, high temperature, hallucinations and phantasmagoria, beatific visions and ideas about the omnipotence and eternity of love, and crazy impractical notions about high ideals, heroism, sacrifice, and so on. Yes, my son, you have it bad; and the worst feature of your disease is that they who have it never want to get rid of it, and pay no heed to the wise advice of physicians and counsellors. Your ailment is as befuddling as opium, as intoxicating as whiskey, and more dangerous than both. It has caused more young men to fail in life than those two combined. Listen to me when I tell you that you are simply the dupe of old Nature: she has her ends in view, and she practises her deceptions on the young and inexperienced. When persons arrive at my time of life they are not fooled by her tricks, and showy, catchy misrepresentations. They become cool and reasonable, and don't let that stupefying little Cupid lead them a-dance. Young men lose a great deal of valuable time dallying with love. If they would just start out and take it as a plain, ordinary affair, and second-

ary consideration, taking it as a matter of course like they take their dinners and the other natural and accustomed details of life: — if they would just take it as men past fifty do, they'd succeed much better in life.

“ Also, my son, you want to make a good start in life before you marry; thirty years of age is plenty of time. You will have passed through the first and most violent stage of youthful fever then, and will be able to see things with clearer vision. Hasty marriages contracted in youth are often as fatal to success and happiness as a chronic disease. Marriage is a grave step, my boy, and should be taken circumspectly. Separate from that girl, and in a year's time you will see the wisdom of my advice. Marry her, and you blight all your prospects and all my hopes. In a month or two, being surfeited with love, you would be cursing your folly and wishing you were free again. Marry her, and you'll go down to her level — you'll lose all ambition — you'll settle down here in the country in desuetude, tied to a wife who in the nature of things is bound to prove as a leaden weight dragging you down from high aspiration and achievement.

“ You say she is a good girl — pretty — noble — sensible, and all that. Perhaps she is — I don't know; I never paid much attention to her, — though, of course, one in your condition is apt to exaggerate the facts, and multiply her perfections a thousandfold. Maybe she is a fine young woman, but that is not the question — there are lots of fine women in the world, as you will find out some day — just lots of them, and pretty too. Make your way in the world, and you will have no difficulty in getting one worthy

of you, — worthy in intellect, worthy in social position, worthy in culture and breeding, and maybe with money, too, — who knows?

“ I would have put an end to Lane’s tenancy years ago if I had ever dreamed that his daughter was eventually to put my son under such a spell, and make an ass of him.

“ No, my son, you cannot get my consent — you must not marry her — you *shall* not marry her if I can prevent it. I will give the girl a talk myself; and if you were to remain here I’d soon get her out of the way; but you must go out into the world and make a name for yourself. This affair must be broken up: you must leave right away: I will see to it. I have high hopes of you, and they shall not be thwarted. Your career shall not be nipped in the bud by a silly little country girl.”

III.

The next day John, heavy-hearted, and wishing to be alone, started for the small lake a mile’s distance through the fields and woods, to fish, to think, to compose himself, and, if possible, to determine. He wished to see Laura, but he feared to do so until he had weighed well his father’s words. Having been trained in a due appreciation of filial duty, and of the respect due the wisdom of parental advice, his father’s words could but have their influence with him. All the morning, and the better part of the night he had vacillated and questioned, trying to decide, but never doing so. His father had arranged it all for him — that he was to leave the next day, and was even then having his things packed for

him; — but John had not determined, and could not determine.

It was useless for him to fish: he absent-mindedly threw his hook into the water] without any bait on it, and sat dreaming in the boat.

At length he could stand it no longer: he must see her: she would answer all questions, dispel all doubts. He got up, dropped the rod in the boat, and started back, taking a circuitous path which would bring him up in the rear of Laura's home.

Lane's house sat out on the edge of a clearing. Back of it there was a beautiful forest glade full of moss, ferns, and violets. Through this a little stream ran singing and purling over pebbles and yellow sand. Passing through the glade, John came upon Laura digging violets.

Each started, seeing the other. She spoke first.

"I saw your father this morning; he told me you were going to-morrow: I hoped I would not see you any more."

"Hoped you would not see me any more?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"O, don't ask me." And there was a wail, and a sob, and a heart full of anguish in the words. "I cannot stay here with you," she continued, — "I must not — I must go home."

He saw the tears in her eyes as she turned to go.

"Laura," he cried, rushing forward and catching her in his arms, — "you shall not go — you must stay here and see me, and let me talk with you."

"It will do no good," she said, — "let me go."

“No, I will not till you promise to stay, and talk with me a little while. Do you promise?”

“Yes, I suppose I’ll have to.”

“Then sit down here by me, and let’s talk. You have seen my father, you say?”

“Yes, we had a long talk, and I promised him I would not see you any more before you left.”

“‘Before I left!’—and have I said I was going yet? Laura, I cannot go—I cannot leave you—I will not! We will be married, and that right away.”

“No, John,” she said firmly, “we will not. I cannot, and will not marry you—I love you too well to do it. Your father is right; you would throw your life away were you to marry me. You shall never do it.”

“You say you will not marry me because you love me too well!—that’s no reason. Even if what my father says be true, yet I am willing to make the sacrifice—I want to make it. I am willing to sacrifice all hopes, all ambitions on the altar of love. Family, pride, fame, wealth—whatever share I have, or hope to have, in these things I am ready to yield, if need be, for the sake of love.”

“You think so now, but were I to marry you—were I to consent—in a little while you would regret it. You are now blinded with a passion which I know and believe to be deep, true, and sincere, but, I fear, not lasting. In a little while its warmth and enthusiasm might cool—your eyes would be opened—you would regret bitterly the step you had taken; and your life would be blighted. I know you would always love me—always be kind and gentle; but it would not be the same love as that you feel for me to-day.

It would be the love of duty — the love of pity — the love of a nature that resignedly makes the best of a result which itself has brought about — the love of a resolute will striving to throw a glamour over its destiny manifestly dark.

“No, John, it must not be: I love you too much for it. I love you deeply, passionately, truly; but my nature is not as impulsive as yours. You allow your judgment to be swept away on the high tide of your emotions and impulses, and looking at the pleasures of the present, you would take rash steps, forgetting the resultant ills of the future.”

“What shall we do, then?” he said, — “we love each other — what shall we do? Cursed be the social conditions and customs which keep lovers apart. Shall we obey the mandates of nature, or of man? — which is the higher law? Human laws, and human customs — they are well enough where the exigencies of society require them — necessitate them. But they are for the governance and maintenance of the politic, and not the individual body. Without them the social organism would be a chaos. But you and I, here in this Arcadia — in this quiet corner of the world — why should we be amenable to other laws than nature’s — than God’s? Love, and its fulfilment is God’s law; shall we obey it or man’s institutions?”

“What do you mean?”

He slipped his arm around her, and looked into her eyes.

“What do I mean? — I scarcely know what I mean. I know but one thing now, Laura; I know but one word — love — love.”

He kissed her once, twice, again. They kiss once — long.

And human nature, youth, and love is too much for them. They pluck the golden fruit of sin. They fall.

The shades of evening darken as they go homeward. She weeps silently: he has his arm about her.

“Now, I *will* marry you,” he says; “I’ll have to, and I want to.”

“No, never,” she answers; “I will repent; I shall be forgiven. No harm will come of it. I sinned — you sinned, but it was because of love. There was no evil in our hearts. We listened to the voice of love and nature, and they cried so loud, we heard not the still, small voice. I am sure no harm will come of it. You go into the world, and achieve wealth and fame, and leave me and forget me.”

They had now reached the gate that led into the yard of her humble home. The voice of a distant whippoorwill came in a sweet mellow monotony from the dark forest. A crescent moon, and a bright evening star shone in the west as bright brooches in the twilight’s lambent veil. The dog ran out barking, but stopped as he quickly knew them. A gentle southern breeze brought them the fragrance of blooming honeysuckle. Instinctively, they stopped at the gate. Both felt it was a crisis in their lives; both felt that for each it was a moment pregnant with an eternity of meaning. Thus they stood for some moments, neither speaking, but with swelling hearts, and souls full of inexpressible thoughts and feelings. They felt borne away from the surrounding realities — borne out, beyond, far away into the infinities of being, into the illimitable circuits of destiny. John drew her closer to him.

“I will go,” he whispered; “but I shall come back soon.

Success can but come quickly to me when I work for you — when I remember this moment. Wait for me: we are young yet: in five years I shall be able to defy the criticism of the world.”

Thus spoke the sanguine blood of youth. Thus spoke the intoxicated blood of love. Thus spoke the young heart which knew not the ways of the world and life.

He bowed his head, and the lips of the young lovers met, and their souls leapt together in a farewell kiss.

John thought great things as he walked home. His senses and emotions were still in a tumult. At one time he would stop and kneel beneath the stars, and pray with a deep, yearning humility. What he prayed he could not have told; for the prayer was felt rather than spoken or thought. Again, he would clench his fist in some wild impulsive determination or resolution; while again he would walk rapidly along whistling merrily, and with buoyant hopes. Such is the young heart.

Laura stood looking up at the starry skies for some time after John had gone. In her bosom, too, were great conflicting emotions. Now big tears welled up in her eyes, so that the stars seemed to swim and flicker in the heavens. Then a great softness, a great tenderness, seemed to swell in her soul, embracing all the universe, all eternity. Anon, and her heart seemed to shrink, and wither away; the fountains of her tears ran dry; her feelings seemed acrid; her soul bitter. She felt as if a great cloud of sorrow, dark and smothering, rolled over her being. After awhile she brushed the tears away, and composing her features as best she could, turned towards the door.

Inside, the humble supper was spread, and her father and mother, seated at opposite ends of the plain wooden table, were partaking of it. They did not even look up as she came in and took her seat at the side of the table. They were stolid, indifferent persons, with unimaginaive minds contracted and hardened by lives of pleasureless toil. After Laura had helped herself to the simple fare, and was making pretense to eat, they both looked up at her as though thinking of her for the first time since she entered.

“What makes you so late? and what’s the matter with you?” her father asked.

“Nothing; the evening was pleasant, and I came along slowly.”

“Been with John Ardslye again, haven’t you?”

“Yes, I saw him.”

“And you have been crying. What did he do to make you cry?”

“Nothing.”

This was all that was said at the table; and save for the clatter of the crockery and knives and forks, the meal proceeded silently to its end.

During the interrogatories, Laura’s mother never raised her eyes from her plate, or showed in any way that she was interested. She wore a set, sphinx-like expression which seldom changed, and her movements were always those of an automaton. To all appearances she might have been a piece of machinery constructed for the performance of domestic duties, and endowed with no faculties other than were necessary for that purpose.

Both Laura’s father and mother knew that there were

relations existing between young Ardslye and their daughter. Just what those relations were they probably did not know, nor put themselves to sufficient mental effort to find out. Whatever the relationship was, and whatever its results, they thought they could not lose seriously; while great benefits might redound to them from it. Of family pride they had none, and to have their name coupled, even by scandal, with that of the most cultured and highly respectable young man of the neighborhood was considered by them more of an honor than a disgrace. Then, even if the worst came, they had vague ideas about the efficacy of the law in enforcing marriage or a pecuniary atonement. There were the possibilities of blackmail, too; and all things being considered, the relationship, whatever it might be, was to be encouraged rather than interfered with. It was also possible, they thought, that the young man's intentions were solely those of honorable marriage; for they were conscious of how superior their daughter was to themselves, by reason of her wide reading and refined tastes; and as parents always see their children's merits very much magnified, they thought it probable that Laura might marry far above her station in life. So they had winked at rather than restrained her keeping company with John.

IV.

The following day John leaves for a great northern city; he opens an office for the practice of his profession, and though of moderate means, his good looks, refinement, cul-

ture and talents are immediate passports to the best circles of society.

As time goes on, he loses in large part his native sterling and original depth of character and integrity, and becomes polished, but more superficial and worldly, like many young society men raised in a great city. Yet there still slumbers in his heart some sparks of the old fires: at intervals they glow, and warm, and flicker, sending a thrill of sweet, sad yearning through his spirit. Of evenings when he had returned from a ball he would sometimes sit before his fire and smoke, and dream a while. The glamour of the ball room had faded; the gilt and garish excitement was gone; and the old visions and ideals would rise up before him. As he mused in the dim light and quiet of his room, half awake, half asleep, he would fancy that he saw the face of Laura floating in the smoke before him—dim, uncertain, but beautiful and sorrowful. He would see her as she was when they were children together, just in their teens, playing and romping round the straw-stacks, and roaming the woods and fields. There was the little peach-blow face with its clear blue eyes, and carmine lips with their childish pout. There was the maze of tousled gold hair floating in a wanton aureole about her head.

Then the smoke would waver, and the face vanish to reappear as it was some years later. Now it was maturer, but still with all the naïve beauty and innocence of a child. The eyes were deeper, and love spoke from them. The face had an expression of deep, conscious joy. So she had been at eighteen when first love bourgeoned in her soul, and all the latent graces of her being quickened. So she had been

when he, too, first knew what love was — when he had first whispered the tender words in her ear, awkward and trembling, yet knowing she loved him.

Again the vision changed, and there was her face as he saw it last, in the pale moonlight and twilight, white and fearful, but fair, and full of confiding hope. There she was standing before the door of the lowly home into which he had brought shame: there she was after the crisis of her life, full of undefined fears, but strong in her love and trust of him. And he — well, he would not think of it: no good could come of it. He would go to bed. It was but a silly misgiving — but a silly doubt which rose in his breast as to whether he had thrown away the best in life — whether he had sacrificed life's truest blessings on the altar of ambition. Was he not successful? Had he not already, in a measure, achieved wealth and distinction? Were those things not worth more than the love of a plain country girl? Certainly — *sed quaere?* And John would go to bed.

In the morning it was the cold, practical, business world again; and last night's dreams were not worth a moment's thought.

Heredity may furnish the material for the character, but it is environment which molds and shapes it. Heredity and environment — these are the potters of the human clay.

John's character was necessarily affected by his surroundings. Under the stress of condition and circumstance he became more conventional, more mercenary.

Thus matters tended until one night at a ball, John met Mrs. Van Bergen, and as he saw more of this lady, she

became a factor in his life and began to exercise a strong influence over his actions, if not over his character.

Mrs. Van Bergen was a very wealthy and pretty, but very frivolous young widow. Violence of passions and emotions were her only characteristics which the fickleness of her nature did not render uncertain. If there was any stable quality in her at all, it was her love of excitement and sensation. She possessed the love of sensation as the one constant star in a mental horoscope of comets and meteors.

When Mrs. Van Bergen met John Ardslye, with her, it was love at first sight — violent, passionate love. He immediately became her fad, her hobby, her latest and most delightful source of pleasurable excitement. How glorious it was to be in love! And how she adored him! After the ball she went home all a-tingle with the joyous consciousness of her new passion. How she had longed to be in love again after she had gotten tired of her husband; and how, after his death, that desire had been quadrupled. But it was something which money could not buy, and all her wealth had been unavailing to purchase the thing she most desired. And now it had come unbidden, and unexpected. Life was worth living again. She would feel *blasè* no longer: she was in love. How joyous! How exhilarating! She would revel in the delectable intoxication of her new passion. No doubt as to the reciprocation of her love entered her mind. She was accustomed to having her own way, and enforcing her will in every thing. Her beauty and wealth had generally cleared her path of all obstacles except those imposed by her own nature. She did not doubt for a moment but that he would love her too. While

the enthusiasm of her moods lasted she had unbounded confidence in herself—a confidence which, in fact, seldom failed to carry her points. Of course he would love her, too, if he did not already. He could not—he *dare* not do otherwise.

For a long time Mrs. Van Bergen lay awake while such thoughts rushed through her heated brain. Then she fell asleep, and dreamed of John.

The next day she gave an entertainment at her own house, a few select friends being invited. Really, if not nominally, John was treated as the guest of honor. While dancing with him the preceding night, Mrs. Van Bergen had planned it all, quick as a flash, and had invited him, telling him that he must come, and that she would hear no refusal. John was willing enough, and was promptly on hand. Society in the city held it a great privilege to be the guest of Mrs. Van Bergen, and John congratulated himself upon his easy entrée into the exclusive circles. It did not take him long to guess the cause of the favor shown him. Indeed, Mrs. Van Bergen was at no pains to conceal it; and after the entertainment at her house it was the talk of the town. Her attentions to John, her smiles, and graciousness towards him told a tale which was unmistakable. In the course of the evening, she got him off in a secluded nook, upon a cushioned divan behind some palms, and there held a lengthy *tete-a-tete* with him, while the rest of the company was left under the auspices of an old friend who took the rôle of hostess.

As they sat together in the subdued light, surrounded by flowers, while the strains of soft sweet music seemed to

sound a reveille to gentle pssions, John looked at her, and felt a thrill very like love, even though it were but love of the moment. She looked her best in evening dress, and she knew it. Her neck, and arms, and shoulders were perfect — smooth, white, and rounded as though cast in Venus's own mold. Were love fatal, a look into her beautiful eyes, then brilliant with her passion, would be dangerous. It was enough to make the brain reel.

John sat there by her side, talking shop. His heart became the playground of conflicting emotions. It was not long before he was sure of her infatuation for him, and he was overwhelmed with the suddenness of what might mean a very momentous state of affairs for him. He was embarrassed, perplexed, and he wanted time to weigh the matter in his mind. One moment he would think himself in love with her — another, and she would seem repellent to him. Then the great possibilities of a marriage with her would flash through his mind: what *èclat*, what success it would be.

“Suppose we go and try that waltz,” he said presently, after a lull in the conversation, when he was fearful lest she should bring on some crisis which he was not yet prepared to meet.

“Don't you think it is more pleasant sitting here?” she said, looking up into his eyes, — “it is so warm dancing, and if I dance with you I will have to dance with others.”

“And don't you want to dance with others?”

“No, I care very little for dancing, anyhow. I think it is a queer custom — an invention, I suppose, by fast girls for the benefit of bashful men. I don't care to have promis-

cuous men putting their arms around me in public ; and if I like a man, I had just as soon he do it in private.”

“ Do you like me ? ”

She did not reply, but looked up at him for an instant, and then let her eyes fall till the glorious lashes seemed to sweep her cheek, and even in the dim light John could see the color deepen and spread on her face. There was stillness and a pause for a moment ; and then he silently put his arm around her.

V.

For some time after coming to the city John had kept up a correspondence with Laura. At first it was three letters a week he sent her : then two : then one ; then it lapsed into irregularity, and he answered her letters now and then when he had nothing else to do. Gradually, as she seemed to recede further and further out of his life, he stopped writing to her altogether. Letter after letter came from her asking him what was the matter. Some of them brought violets from the woodland glade where they used to play ; one brought a lock of her hair ; and others, simple, touching tokens of the love of a country child.

John would read these letters and stick them away in a private drawer. Not one did he ever destroy, or leave unopened. Though, as his knowledge of the world broadened, he would often smile as he read some of their tender, unaffected passages. Sometimes, too, he would feel a pang of remorse, or a tear would come in his eye. But then he would persuade himself that he was in no way to blame for his inconstancy. Fate had marked him for a higher des-

tiny; his father had been right; and it was his duty to strangle the love, the silly passion, which would not advance him in the world.

Finally there came a letter — the last she ever wrote him — telling him of her shame — of her approaching motherhood. Thus it ran in part: —

“I have been fearing it for some time, but I was not certain, and said nothing of it to you. But now I know it, and every one else does. My father has been cruel — brutal — to me, and has bidden me leave his house. I go to-morrow, gladly — where, I know not; but I have become an outcast, and all my friends now scorn me, and look upon me as a degraded wretch. In my heart there is no sense of shame — I loved you — I love you still, and I will love my child; but I cannot stand the contumely of my friends and acquaintances. Do not think that I am unhappy, or that I would say anything to make you unhappy. We followed the dictates of love, and why should we regret it? And though we are offenders against the laws of mankind, I believe that before the Highest Tribunal we stand forgiven, if not guiltless.

“I will always pray for you; I will always love you. And rest assured, that if God be willing your child shall have a decent raising. While I live it shall never need anything a watchful and loving mother can give. Deeper than the sorrow I feel because I am disgraced in the eyes of the world — deeper than any impression my circumstances and surroundings can ever make upon me, there is a joy in my heart. I will always hold to, and cherish the ideals we saw and strove for — those ideals of the mind, the heart, and the soul — when we were together reading, talking, and rambling through the woodlands, and always under first love’s hallowed auspices. If the memory of these things is painful to you, forget them. I will ever take pride and pleasure in the success and fame which I know will be yours. Your success will be my joy. And I will always be thankful that we parted unwed, and that I am not as a stumbling block in the pathway of your glorious

career — as a canker in the heart of your high hopes — as a mortification to your noble pride; and as a millstone about your neck, dragging you down from the course of high endeavor. Good-bye."

After reading this letter, John's first impulse was to leave the city at once, giving up all his bright prospects in life, and go and seek Laura, marry her, and settle down in some quiet nook of the world, in peace and contentment, could he find them. There was little chance of his taking this radical course if he hesitated, and hesitate he did.

When two courses lie open to a man, the one an extreme departure, the other conservative and discreet, he will seldom take the former unless he acts quickly under the spur of the moment. Let there be deliberation, reckoning, and weighing, and the latter course will be taken.

John did not act on the emotion of the moment, and that emotion soon grew cool. He deferred the hasty action prompted by sentiment until he could see the matter in the light of worldly wisdom. Having seen it thus, he laughed at himself for thinking, even for an instant, of taking such a step.

Reason and sentiment are often at variance; but give time and room for reason to have its play, and it will generally come out conqueror.

John thought of his engagement, and approaching marriage with Mrs. Van Bergen; he thought of the dazzling brilliancy of the career he had entered upon. Was he not soon to be married to the wealthiest — aye, and one of the most beautiful women in the city? Was not his happiness and success assured? The idea of his giving up these pros-

pects for the sake of a little silly sentiment, and boyish passion!

Then, when the question arose in his mind of the duty and moral responsibility resting on him to do all in his power to right the wrong he had done, he would reason that she had exonerated him herself. She said she was not unhappy, and that his happiness would always be hers. What more could he do? The wrong he committed was done without evil intention. He could plead the statute of youth and the delirium of love. He was sorry that it had resulted as it did, but he could not help it now. He wondered what would become of her, and — of his child. There was the pang — his child — the child of the girl he had loved. He felt his heart swell, and his eye grow moist as he thought of it all.

But now there came a knock at the door, and these musings must be banished. Present conditions confronted him.

In response to John's "come in" the liveried footman of Mrs. Van Bergen entered. He bore a perfumed note from his mistress, whom John had not seen for several days, as she had been to a distant city in order to perfect some arrangements for the brilliant wedding she had planned. The note ran: —

"MY DEAREST JOHN:

I have just gotten back, and am pining to see you. Though only for a week, the separation has seemed an age. I was very fatigued when I arrived, but the prospect of seeing you soon has refreshed me. Come over this afternoon, and we will take a drive in the park. O, how impatient I am to see you! O, how impatient I am for the wedding day! And what a weariness is all this prep-

aration and waiting! Hurry up and come, or I shall die of love-sickness. With what zest you have thrilled life for me! Hurry up and come.

YOUR LOVING MAUD."

John gravely read this characteristic *billet doux*, deliberately refolded it, placed it in its envelope, and put it in his pocket. The stolid, statuesque footman standing by with folded arms and immobile face saw no change of expression as he read it.

This footman, though outwardly an automaton when acting in his official capacity among his superiors, was extremely human when with his peers in the servants' hall. Among them he was known as a delightful gossip and talker who never suffered a day to go by but that he retailed to them some racy bit of news, prophecy, or scandal which he had gathered or improvised while on his daily rounds. He had a most lively imagination, and from the merest thread of evidence or fact could weave a wonderful web of intrigue. His mind was as a blotter ever ready to absorb the inky smudges of scandalous gossip. All day long he went around in the mechanical performance of his duties, while his senses were ever in a state of alert receptivity to the smallest breath of anything which savored of gossip. While he watched John read the note, the blank expression of his face did not indicate in the slightest degree the eager activity of his mind as he surmised and drew his conclusions. It was the chief aim of his life to keep well informed as to the amours of his mistress.

John answered the note briefly, saying he would come. Of course, it was necessary to throw in a few dulcet words

and phrases too. Then he sealed and gave it to Tupper, the footman.

Tupper did not return directly to Mrs. Van Bergen's with the note. He took a circuitous route and came into the house by the servants' entrance, and went around to the kitchen. As he came along he had held the note up to the light, pressing the envelope tightly, looking at it in every angle, trying to see if he could read any words through the paper. But his efforts were fruitless — the paper was of a delicate tint of coloring, and was opaque.

On reaching the kitchen, he went up to a kettle which was sending a jet of hot steam into the air. He held the letter in the steam for some minutes, and then with his knife carefully loosened the seal and opened it. The cook and several other servants witnessed this operation, and had gathered around him in awed silence. Such happenings were not of uncommon occurrence in the kitchen, and occasioned no surprise, but only increased their admiration for Tupper, and redounded to his glory. They looked upon one who had the daring and ingenuity to do such deeds as a hero. The few questions they asked in ominous whispers, Tupper deprecated with an imperious uplifting of his hand, and a grave, portentous shake of the head. He recognized his leadership, his power, his prestige, and it would not do to be too condescending. He silently brushed them aside, and perused the note himself, holding it high above their heads. As he read it, he would purse his lips, grunt, stretch his eyes, raise his brows, and then assume an expression of great gravity and wisdom. He ran the whole gamut of facial expression, well knowing how such proceedings intensified the

excruciating curiosity of the others. Having finished reading, he solemnly cleared his throat, and then taking note book and pencil from a secret pocket, he sat down and quickly copied the note. Another solemn clearing of the throat, and he walks to a corner shelf of the kitchen, moves several jars, turns up a box, and takes out a bottle of mucilage. He applies the brush, and carefully re-seals the letter, holding it up over the stove a while to dry. Then, still ignoring the presence of the other servants, he replaces the letter in his pocket, and stalks out.

VI.

When John went over to Mrs. Van Bergen's that afternoon, he found her in hat and wraps impatiently awaiting him, while her handsome trap and dashing pair of bays were at the door. As he came in she rushed forward and dramatically threw her arms around his neck.

Tupper, whose eye was at the key-hole, reproduced the scene that night in the servants' hall in capital burlesque, getting one of the maids to represent Mrs. Van Bergen, while he impersonated John.

Mrs. Van Bergen's hysterical manifestation of her love having abated, she and John went out, and started on their drive. On through the park they went, and out into the country beyond, the spirited horses speeding away without urging by whip or word. Soon the last scattering houses of the suburbs lay behind them, — but they kept on, going rapidly over the fine road stretching through field and woodland, passing here and there an occasional farm house

with its neat barn and fences, its weathercock and wind-mill.

"I thought perhaps we would enjoy it," said Mrs. Van Bergen, when the last house of the suburbs had receded from view, "as I am still a little fatigued, and maybe you are too after the morning's work; — so I brought a little wine — champagne — along. Reach down, John, dearest, and take the bottles from under the seat. We are out on a lovers' lark, and can dispense with glasses, and drink it from the bottle as we go along."

John took out the bottles as directed; and they quaffed the genial beverage in no stinted quantity, their method of drinking not admitting of an exact gage. Having drunk as much as their discretion or inclination dictated, the bottles were replaced under the seat, and they drove on — Mrs. Van Bergen prattling away, admiring the scenery, and saying amorous nothings.

"Glorious!" she exclaimed. How happy I am! John, why are you so silent? — you seem low-spirited."

"No, you misinterpret my silence, Maud: do you not think that there are times when all words seem trite and commonplace? Do you not sometimes feel that words are but a poor medium for the communication of soul with soul? Do you not believe in love's telepathy? and that, when two souls are surcharged with love's electricity, words are vain and unnecessary — that to the highly sensitive nature immersed in love's divinest emotion they may even be grating and unwelcome? Well, that is the way I feel now. Let us look into each other's eyes, Maud — that is better than talking."

There can be little doubt as to the sincerity of these words of John at the time they were spoken. Companionship with this beautiful woman had intoxicated him with momentary love, which with his youth and inexperience he took to be eternal. What man with red blood in his veins would not have capitulated to the Little Tyrant under such circumstances?

A beautiful woman is the greatest winner of momentary victories in the world. She can bend the iron will of man as though it were a reed. Reason strikes its colors to her; wisdom becomes her slave; even Honor herself, will often, at her bidding, cast her spotless escutcheon in the dust.

What wonder that John should be victimized when he had placed himself so completely in the enemy's power? He was in Cupid's *cul-de-sac*. Out driving on a fair autumn afternoon with a beautiful woman along a lonely road. A man far less susceptible than he would have been vanquished under similar conditions. Nor was it the first time John had felt he loved her. He had felt himself carried away by her before: so now he fell an easy victim. When in her presence, and in the high tide of the emotion she aroused in him, he never thought how ephemeral and transient those feelings were, or how he looked upon them in soberer and more rational moments. His whole individuality would be merged in the infatuation of the moment, and he would live only in the present, looking neither before nor behind. He believed implicitly that she loved him with a love which could never die. It was easier for him to believe in her love than in his own; and once believing in hers, it made his, such as it was, seem more probable. John had many

strong points of character, but his love of the fair sex overmastered all other qualities of his nature. If it may be called a weakness, it was his greatest. His love—very much like Mrs. Van Bergen's in many ways—resembled an avalanche—sudden, overwhelming and of short duration. Without premonition it swept down upon him, while his reason, resolutions, and purposes were helpless before it.

When John finished speaking, Mrs. Van Bergen drew a deep sigh, and looked up in his eyes as he requested. The road was lonely; the horses were trotting along at a steady, even gait, and the November sunset was throwing a light of gold and rose over the earth. There was her pretty face so close to his; there were her big, lustrous eyes with their gentle, dove-like expression, looking into his. John bent over and kissed her.

Happy lovers!—they are engaged—soon to be married.—nothing improper. Let us not intrude; for the reins have slipped from John's hands, and unobserved by the blissful pair, are dangling over the dash board.

Now one of the horses is named Daisy, and the other is Turk; and both are feeling lively and playful this afternoon, as the air is cool and bracing. They have been frolicking, and teasing each other more or less all during the drive. Turk would lean over and bite Daisy on the neck, and Daisy would switch her tail, and back her ears, and snap back. As the sun goes down, and the air gets more nip in it, they get still more hilarious.

“Where the deuce can they be driving us to, do you suppose?” Turk says to Daisy,—“I never was so far out in the country before in my life. Doesn't that farmer's fodder

stack over there smell good! I'm getting hungry, too. It's high time we were going back."

"Yes," said Daisy, "I think so myself. I'm getting hungry enough to eat wet shucks. I should think it was time we were going back. I begin to feel nervous, too — so far out in the country, and night coming on. Think I would jump out of my skin if a rabbit ran across the road."

"O, shucks! I am not nervous, but feeling mighty frisky, barring a little emptiness. I'm enjoying this outing. Wish I was a country horse. Doesn't this ground feel nice and soft under your feet, and isn't the air fresh? We city horses don't have any fun. If I was a country horse I'd break into somebody's cornfield every day. One enjoys grub so much more when it's seasoned with mischief. B'lieve I'd rather have a stolen cornstalk for my supper in the country, than to have barley and meal, and be cooped up in the city. Gracious me! — they've let the reins drop; they must have gone to sleep. Tell you what let's do, Daisy — you see those juicy looking hayricks over there in that field, don't you? — well, I'm in for a frolic: — suppose we kick up our heels, and break loose from this infernal runabout, and go over there, and enjoy ourselves. Won't it be jolly wallowing in it, and eating it at the same time? And then there's a calf out there that we can chase, and tease its old ma; and when she runs at us we can give her our heels in the face. My! it's the chance of a lifetime. That pair back there have gone to sleep and forgotten us: they are lovers, you know. I do hate to be driven by lovers — they usually drive slowly, but they drive so devilish long, and they are so selfish and absent-minded. We will

just give that couple back there a gentle reminder that we are still living, and are not going to be imposed upon. They are treating us shamefully. While they feast on love, they ought to be willing for their poor horses to have a little hay. They forget that you and I are not lovers, Daisy, and need a solid practical supper."

"But," Daisy demurred, "we haven't any excuse to run away. Whoever heard of horses running away without any excuse? If something would just happen to give us an excuse to get scared: if a bicycle or bear would only come along; but to run away all of a sudden without any excuse would be rather peculiar."

"Pshaw! you females are always higgling about excuses and appearances. What better excuse do you want than those reins hanging down there, and dangling on your legs? Any horse with any mettle wouldn't stand that sort of a thing. Now I am going to count, and when I say 'three', we both will kick up at the same time, and tear down the road as hard as we can, dash up that bank, jump over the fence, and into the field. If we do it right, I think we can leave the vehicle on this side of the fence. I think the harness will be pretty well loosened up by the time we get up the bank."

"All right — I don't care — go ahead."

VII.

The next instant the preoccupation of John and Mrs. Van Bergen was interrupted by a violent lurch of the vehicle as it suddenly came to a standstill. The horses reared

and plunged, the shafts cracked, and Mrs. Van Bergen screamed. John made a frantic effort to catch the reins, but they were under the horses' heels, and before he could regain his presence of mind, the horses commenced to tear down the road at a fearful rate of speed. Hardly had they gotten well under way, with the earth flying, and the wheels nearly humming, when they swerved violently to the right, dashed up a steep bank several feet high, overturning the vehicle, and then jumped the fence at the top of the elevation.

The lovers were thrown violently out, and rolled down the bank in mingled confusion. But save a few bruises, the shock and jolting, neither was hurt. The trap, with the exception of the shafts and two front wheels and axle, which were still attached to the horses, was a mass of wreckage lying by the fence. The horses, with the fore wheels after them, trotted complacently to the hayricks at some distance in the field, and there stopped and proceeded to enjoy themselves.

Meantime, John and Mrs. Van Bergen picked themselves up, testing their limbs, and examining their persons, fearful lest they discover some fracture or injury. They were a dejected looking pair, with their soiled and torn clothes, their bruised and scratched faces.

"Are you injured, John, dearest?" Mrs. Van Bergen inquired as soon as she had collected her senses, and tested the soundness of her own limbs.

"No, I believe not," said John, shaking himself, and brushing the earth off his coat. He forced a sorry laugh,

being disposed to make light of the matter. "Are you hurt, Maud?" he inquired.

"I scarcely know yet — ah! dear, it was so sudden — how did it happen? — what made them run away? John, dear, are you certain you are not injured internally? I have heard of so many persons who were injured internally and did not know it for several days. O, John, if you should be injured internally! And just suppose one of us had been killed or injured for life. Suppose you were killed, and I was not — oh! — oh! Thank Heaven it is not so — thank Heaven!" And Mrs. Van Bergen sank down quite overcome with the thought.

"Well, we haven't time to indulge in sentimental ifs and might-have-beens," John said. "You see, Maud, it is nearly dark, and we are miles from town, and with no means of getting there. We are in this lonely country, and night's upon us. We will have to see if we can find any farm house around here where we can get lodging for the night. You see the condition of our vehicle, and its no use fooling with the horses. Come on, — I see a column of smoke rising over the trees yonder: let's make our way towards it."

He slipped his arm about her, and they started. On rounding the turn of the road, they came in view of an humble, one-story, frame dwelling house. It had a certain degree of homelike comfort and cosiness, which, added to the savory odor of the evening meal that greeted their olfactories, made the hearts of the disconsolate pair feel lighter.

They knocked at the door, and an elderly, roughly dressed man, with a long beard, and rather kindly face, opened it,

and having greeted them with a cordial bow, bade them walk in. They told him their story briefly, and asked if they could get accommodations for the night.

“ Well, well,” their host said, as he ushered them into the chief bed and sitting-room of the house, where there appeared to be a considerable gathering of visitors around the fireplace, — “ I thought you was some of the weddin’ guests. Had a runaway, and smashup, eh? Well, I suppose we’ll hev to store you ’way somewheres — don’t like to be unhospital. From the city, eh? — how come you to be ’way out in these backwoods? and what air you — husband and wife — brother and sister — cousins, or jus’ friends? Friends? — yes, I see: — no ties of blood or effinity. You look like mighty good friends, and you must be, or you wouldn’t risk your necks for each other as you seem to have done this evenin’. Well, I’m sorry you ain’t married, and will hev to hev separate quarters. We air crowded here this evenin’ and will hev a hard time storin’ you ’way in separate departments. You see, I am a jestice of the peace, and am going to marry a couple here to-night; and there’s to be a dance and ginerall big-to-do, and course my house is full almost to the bustin’ limit. However, I think we can do something with you — my old ’oman is very ingenious in packing things, and ’conomizing space — but I wish you was a married couple, jus’ for the sake of convenience. You two step in this side room, and I’ll give you a chance to wash some of that dirt out of your eyes. You both look like you been run through a sausage mill, and then put to makin’ mud pies.”

He led them into a smaller apartment adjoining the

sitting room, and giving them a pitcher of water, a tin basin, a cake of home-made soap, and a rough towel, he closed the door, and left them to perform their toilet, after telling them as he went out: — “Y’all better spink up best you know how: this is goin’ to be a real gran’ weddin’ here to-night.”

Left to themselves, John and Mrs. Van Bergen looked at each other, both smiling.

“Quite an experience, Maud,” John said.

“It is indeed; but do you know, John, dear, that an idea has occurred to me?”

“No, dear, I did not; what is it?”

“Well, our narrow escape this evening has made me reflect on the extreme uncertainty of life and of the fulfilment of all mundane hopes of happiness. How often it is that through a little delay, or some unforeseen accident we miss the dearest boons of life; and I have come to the conclusion that it is our duty — that we should always avail ourselves of present opportunities of happiness — that we should never delay clinching the nail of our joys. We have only the present, and we should pluck its fruits while in our reach: who knows how soon they will be rotten and fallen. Fate is fickle: let us quaff the wine she offers us to-day, or to-morrow it may be a beaker of woe. Let us not scorn to pluck the flowers along the present path in hope of more beautiful ones beyond. Further on there may be only thistles. Procrastinate drinking the cup of joy, and very likely it will be dashed from your lips.

“Yes, John, dear, you see I’ve been led to take a deep, sober, and philosophic view of these things — think how

easily one of us might have been killed — but there are other considerations too. I am sick and tired of all this preparation for a grand wedding and big display. I am thoroughly worn out with it all — what good is it? — I have had one big wedding, and I know how tiresome and empty it all is, even when one is not desperately in love, and might enjoy a little ostentation. What good is in it all? — just a gaudy show for the populace — just gossip for the newspapers — just a public, glaring, garish manifestation of that event — the welding of two souls — which the loving heart says should be quiet and modest as possible. The sacred altar of matrimony should not be made a place of posing for the galleries. The prayer of the marriage service should not be made a genuflection to the crowd.

“ And then we should have some thought and consideration for these kind people who have taken us in to-night, and who for the sake of kindness and hospitality, subject themselves to inconvenience and trouble. Yes, all things being considered, John, dear, I see no reason why we should not be married to-night, married here by this good man, and have it all over with. It will be such a relief. We can go back to town to-morrow, and start right in on the blissful contentment of married life, and there will be no more waiting, no more fuss and fuming, no more wearisome dressmaking, no sending of invitations, and such troublesome and worrying preliminaries. Of course our friends who want a big wedding will be disappointed, and will call our conduct queer and eccentric; but then we are not getting married to please our friends. My, but won't they be surprised! Yes, John, dear, let us be married here to-

night — let's hurry, and be married quickly. We *must* do it. It will be something out of the usual run of things, too, — a savor of the eccentrically romantic about it, which I like. I like to do startling, original things which surprise people. I am so tired of conventionalities. Thanks to my independent spirit and my bank account, I can be myself, — a crank if you like — with impunity. People with wealth and genius can afford to do queer things; they are not handicapped by the fear of infringing all of society's little laws and regulations. O, I am perfectly carried away with the idea! What do you say, John, dear?"

As soon as Ardslye had grasped the drift and meaning of her words, he had been deliberating upon the advisability of the step which she counseled, and he had come to the conclusion that it was best for him that the marriage come off as soon as possible. Since he had become society's fad, being at its beck and call, and particularly since he had become Mrs. Van Bergen's hobby, his business had suffered, and were he thrown upon his own resources, pecuniary difficulties would be staring him in the face in short time.

"There's many a slip between the cup and the lip," he meditated, repeating to himself an old saw he had often heard his father use; "and the sooner I am married to Maud, and the nail of my good fortune is hammered home and firmly clinched, the better. It's a fortuitous circumstance which has brought us here, and has put her into this way of thinking."

"A capital idea, Maud, — a glorious idea," he then replied. "Do you suppose that I could have any objection to the immediate consummation of our happiness? It

cannot be too soon for me. We men, you know, always prefer a quiet wedding, and I was willing to have the big affair only because I thought you wanted it, darling. I am glad to see that you have a man's ideas regarding it, and prefer to have what should be the greatest and most hallowed event of our lives, modest, quiet, and unpretentious. A quiet wedding, I think, is very often a sign of true love between the chief participants. Love is modest and retiring, and it shrinks from pageantry and ostentation. It finds its most perfect life and development in seclusion and quietude, and not amid the brazen blare of the multitude. The big wedding is often indicative of other motives than those of the heart. Its march may be that of flaunting ostentation and haughty, triumphant pride, and you will seldom see Cupid in the rear guard. Have you never noticed, Maud, how persons of your sex, particularly those who have had a narrow escape from spinsterhood, love a grand wedding? Have you never noticed the expression of supreme, exultant triumph on an old maid's face, as with much pomp and ceremony she marches to the bridal altar, proudly flaunting her matrimonial victory in the jealous eyes of her female friends still pining in the realm of unaffianced maidenhood?

"Yes, love, you can please me no better than to be married at once, and quietly. I believe that a wedding should be an occasion of joy; but let the ceremony itself be one of unobtrusive joy.

"Yet, though we have come to this happy solution, and our tastes and ideas are in such perfect harmony and agreement, there is still a practical consideration to be looked at — there is a little thing which may — merely for the sake of

the proverb — prove a stone in the smooth course of our true love. How about the license, dear?— we want a valid, unquestionable marriage.”

“ That’s so ; I hadn’t thought of that. Love will find out the way. We will see our host, the justice: he may be able to arrange that. Are you ready to go out? That’s a big bruise on your forehead, John, and I have an ugly scratch on my cheek. Bad for the honeymoon, isn’t it? ”

VIII.

“ Justice Barley, we wish to speak privately with you for a moment,” said Mrs. Van Bergen, as she and John re-entered the sitting room where the crowd laughed and chatted around the fire, a few making attempts to decorate the room for the bridal. Mrs. Van Bergen took the energetic initiative in engineering their course, while her fiancée followed passively in her wake.

“ Cert’inly, ma’am, what kin I do for you? ” said Justice Barley, bowing with an awkward attempt at chivalry,— “ what kin I do for your comfit and happiness? Jus’ step right in my office and place of business here, where I ’ministers my jedgements and ’tends to all my official duties.”

He led them into a small, box-like compartment at the other end of the passage-way. There were three or four rough chairs in the room, and a plain unvarnished table. On the wall hung two cheap prints, one a likeness of George Washington, the other that of Henry W. Beecher. On the table there was a big box turned over on its side, and pigeon-holed for the storage of papers. Judging from the label on

its side, this piece of furniture had originally been designed for the packing of groceries, but it upheld with commendable dignity its new rôle of receptacle for legal documents. There were also on the table goosequill pens, a "Justice's Guide," some bundles of paper tied with pink tape and strips of red flannel, and a bottle of ink, or what appeared to be ink, the fluid itself being in a vial labeled "cough mixture and colic cure."

"Jus' hev seats," said the host, as he ushered them in, and, with an air of punctilious importance, closed the door behind them. "You see this here's my hall of jestice:—Gineral Washington up there stands for liberty; Mr. Beecher, he stands for gospel; and I stands for law and ekerty. This here is my wholesale and retail house of jestice. I been ministering law and ekerty in this community for twenty-five years, and I don't mean ter brag er tall,—even if twenty-five years in honorable office ought to give a man some privileges to blow his own horn:—I don't mean to brag er tall, but I claim, and always has claimed that I kin give a man a better quality of law and jestice for less money than any other judge in the State, high or low.

"I don't know what kind of business you want me to do for you, but I guess it's somthin' important, or you wouldn't want to see me in my private office. And I kin see you are both ladies and gentlemen; and before you begin, I want you to understan' the kind of man you dealin' with. We's strangers, and I want you to hev confidence in me from the start.

"As I was tellin' you, my 'pinions, and my jedgements

is strictly first class on all matters whatsoever that comes under my jurisdiction; and there's mighty few things thet don't come under my jurisdiction: I done built up my jurisdiction till its most as broad as thet of all the courts in the country. I never dismisses no suit for want of jurisdiction. If people come to me for jestice, they's goin' to git jestice, if I hev to stretch a pint or two to give it to 'em. It ain't no use sendin' 'em away to another court when they kin git jus' as good jestice right here under their noses. Jestice is jestice, and it's jus' as good comin' from me as 'tis from the Judge of the United States Soopreme Court; and law is law whether it's spoke from the mouth of a jack-rabbit or a king.

“ And right here I want you to understan' thet I don't claim to know all the book-law in the world. I base my 'pinions and verdicts on common sense and my natchul notions of jestice. The Lord made jestice, and put it in people, and people put it in books. Instead of goin' to books, and gettin' it second-hand, I look in my mind, and get jestice right fresh from Providence. I'm a great believer in the principles of primary ekerty; and I ain't never see the case yet where I couldn't decide accordin' to them principles. It's foolishness to go lookin' in books, and gettin the principles of primary ekerty mixed up with a lot of dry-rotten, second-hand law where won't apply to the facts of the case. What you ought to try a case by is the principles of primary ekerty, whether it's a civil suit, or criminal persecution. Solomon tried his cases accordin' to them principles, and he was the wisest man that ever lived up to thet time.

“ People in this neighborhood done learn how to appre-

ciate me, and they bring all kinds of cases, grievances, and businesses to me for me to decide and settle accordin' to my principles of primary ekerty. And its seldom they ever kick against my decisions and rulin's, too, 'cause, as I tell 'em, I hev to uphold the majesty of the law, and hev to be mighty strict, and can't take no foolin'.

“Some time ago there was a young lawyer come out here from the city to try a case — we don't hev no lawyers out here 'cause they don't thrive where you got a good judge thet tries cases accordin' to primary principles. — Well, this young feller, O, he was a dandy — hair parted so plumb in the middle, it must been done with a spirit level, — perfumery — smelt like a whole flower garden — and speckled red necktie, shoes jus' as shiny and slick as his hair, long-tailed coat, and rings on his fingers, soft white hands, and pink cheeks — O, he certinly was pretty. Lots of the wimmin folks came sneakin' round, and peepin' in jus' to get a look at him.

“He came out here drivin' a spankin' pair of horses hitched to some sort of a fancy rig, and had a driver thet was dressed up most as fine as hisself.

“The case where he was goin' to try was one involvin' title to some real estate out here containing some very valuable timber. He said his client was one of them corporation companies or partnerships bodies thet they hev in cities. I ain't never been to the city, and I don't know much about 'em; but I hev heard thet they was bodies of men banded together like a army to commit murders and such crimes thet one man by hisself wouldn't dare to do. If they was to come out here I'd mighty soon break 'em up

with my primary principles. However, thet's off the track, — as I was sayin', this young man said thet this client of his claimed title to the land, and they wanted to bring suit, and recover it, and hev the timber cut. I knew all about the land, and I knew it had been in the possession of my old friend Joe Baker ever since this part of the country was settled. Joe cut down the first tree, and built the first fire thet was ever built on it to my knowledge, and I knew no lying corporation company didn't hev no title to it.

“ Well, thet young man drove up to my door, and holered like somebody calling dogs. I went out, and spoke to him very politely, and asked him what he wanted. He said: ‘ Say, old man, can you tell me the way to the Court House, and clerk's office for the country around here?’ I didn't say nothin' — I simply pointed with my thumb over my shoulder to my house. ‘ What!’ he says, ‘ is that the Court House?’ I says ‘ yes, thet's the only one I know anything about within twenty-five miles of here.’

“ Then he says, ‘ Where's the judge and the clerk?’

“ ‘ Right here, sir; I'm thet gentleman,’ I says.

“ He looked kinder surprised at thet, and his eyes popped as though de didn't know whether to believe me, or to think I was jokin' with him. But twenty-five years on the bench hev give me such an imposin' and dignified air, he soon saw I wan't no man for foolin'.

“ ‘ I am glad to meet you, Judge,’ he said, ‘ and can you tell me where a man named Joseph Baker lives in this neighborhood?’

“ ‘ Yes, sir, — right over there,’ says I, pointin’ to Joe’s house over yonder about half a mile off.

“ ‘ He owns a good deal of valuable timber land, doesn’t he?’

“ ‘ B’lieve he do,’ I answers.

“ ‘ Well,’ he says, ‘ he’s the man I’m after, and I want to investigate his title, and bring suit to upset it.’

“ ‘ The court is open ’ I says.

“ ‘ I want to try it right away, as soon as possible; ’ he says, ‘ as I don’t want to stay in this miserable country any longer than is absolutely necessary.’

“ ‘ All right, sir,’ I says, — ‘ come on, — I’m the officer of jestic, law and ekerty, and here’s the Court House. The door of my temple of jestic is always open; its hinges don’t need no greasin’. Get your witnesses, and I’ll tell the constable to notify Joe Baker, and let him get his, and we’ll proceed with the trial.’

“ ‘ You must have a very summary way of trying cases out here,’ he says.

“ ‘ Yes,’ I answers, ‘ we don’t delay jestic no longer than is necessary. We always like to try cases before the facts and the evidence is cold. Jestic is jestic, but it’s better fresh than stale.’

“ ‘ But you don’t mean to tell me,’ he says, ‘ that you have the power, the jurisdiction, and the legal authority to try all by yourself a case involving the title to real estate, and in so short a time, and without a jury? Suppose I win the case before you — my clients wouldn’t get good, infeasible title?’

“ ‘ Well,’ I answers, ‘ my jurisdiction and authority on

such points ain't never been disputed. Don't you worry, you try your case, and I promise you it will be conducted accordin' to the principles of primary ekerty; and if jestice says your client ought to get that property, he's goin' to get it, and tain't nobody goin' to dispute the decree of my court. Get down, sir,' I says, 'and come in. I'll hev your horses fed, and it's 'bout time we was takin' a bite ourselves.'

"So the young feller and his driver stepped out, and went to the hind' part of the buggy, and got out a whole bag full of law books he had done brought with him; never saw so many in my life — didn't know there was thet many in the world.

" 'Has you got any work there on the primary principles of ekerty?' I asked him.

" 'No,' he said, 'I never heard of that work before.'

" 'Ain't you?' I says, 'well, I don't know as it's been published yet, but you'll hear of it some day. You ain't got no book there on natchul jestice neither?'

" 'No,' he says, 'I hev'n't thet neither — the books I brought are mostly works on real estate.'

" 'Well,' I answers, 'I don't guess it's in the ginerall libraries yet, but I hev it in my private library, and it's a great work: it's got a lot about real estate in it, too, and it always has great weight with me in deciding cases.' "

XIX.

"We went in then and had some dinner," the Justice continued, "and after that I went out in the porch, and blew

my horn for Jack Timkens, the constable. Jack lives over on the hill 'bout quarter mile away, convenient to the Court House. He and I is the pillars of jestic for this community. Jack is a great big feller, as strong as a bull, and ain't afeard of nothin' — not even the devil hisself, and I got him 'pointed constable for those reasons. You see, I'm the law-makin', and judicial branch of the local government, and Jack he is the executive. He stands for the physical strength and force of the law, as I stand for the mind, the wisdom and jestic. It's mighty seldom I has to call on Jack to exercise the slumberin' power and majesty of the law, but when I do, I tell you, he ain't long in upholdin' the dignity of the court, and enforcin' its law and orders. There's always some people, you know, who won't. or can't recognize the primary principles of ekerty and natchul jestic, and when I run across thet class, I has to call in Jack to assert the court's prerogatives. Some people don't pay no 'tention to head-law like I dispenses, so I has to call on Jack to 'minister arm-law to 'em. My head-law is sufficient for most people, but some few ain't never satisfied till Jack expounds his body-law to 'em; then they gets satisfied mighty quick. For I tell you, Jack knows a heap of good law: his law ain't as deep and wise as mine, but it's more practical: mine's mostly theoretical. Jack ain't got much law in his head, but he's got a plenty in his arms, legs, and back, and it's mighty good, convincin' law. When I renders my decree, and Jack he executes it, there is ginerally nothin' more to be said in the case.

“ But as I was telling you, after dinner I went out, as I always does when a case is institooted, and blew my horn

for Jack. In a little while Jack come over, and I told him of the young feller where was come to recover Joe Baker's land, and sent him over to bring Joe and such witnesses as wan't in hearin' distance of the horn. For when I blows the horn, all the neighbors that hears it come a-runnin' to the Court House, as they know a case is on.

“ Well, twan't long before the crowd had come, and Joe was ready with his testimony. He looked mighty surprised and skeered, too, and his eyes was most poppin' out his head ; and he told me on one side thet the institooting of the suit was a great surprise to him, as he hadn't heard it was goin' to be brought, and wasn't prepared to set up his title, though he couldn't see what grounds the other side claimed it on. I told him not to worry, and keep cool till he had done heard the evidence, and seen what sort a case they could make out against him.

“ When they was all ready I rapped for order, and told Jack Timkins to open court. That bein' done, I told the plaintiff to open up his case, and introduce his evidence ; that the court was in session, and was ready to 'minister jesticce to all parties.

“ Then thet young dude got up, and begun to open his books, and took out a roll of maps and papers, and said thet he had a land patent, or government grant, or some such thing, givin' his client, thet corporation company, such and so many acres of land, for value received, thirty years ago, in such and such a county and State, such said land, aforesaid bein' covered with such and so many valuable to-wit feet of timber, and now bein' in possession of, and occupied by a certain person bein' and known, and com-

monly called as one certain to-wit Joseph Baker; wherefore he brings his action of ejectment and so forth, and shows his aforesaid maps and papers to the Court as evidence in the case.

“ When he got through, I asked him if thet was all; and he said yes, thet was all for the present.

“ Then Joe Baker took the stand, and told me his side of the case: — how he’d had the land for twenty-five year, and had been the first settler on it, and had cleared it off with his own hands: how he’d raised his family on it, buried his wife and two or three childrun on it, and how he hoped to be buried on it hisself when he died.

“ When he got through, the young dudie started to cross examine him, and he asked him such personal and insultin’ questions — throwin’ all kinds of ’sinuations on Joe’s character, thet I called him down, and told him he had to conduct hisself in a more respectful manner to the witnesses in a court of jestic. Then the pretty little feller got hot — yes indeed! — his face turned red as a termato, and he jumped up and went off like a firecracker. He hit his fist on the table, and I do believe he even shook it at the Court of jestic: he said the Court was biassed and predjudiced, and it didn’t hev authority and jurisdiction to try the case nohow; and thet it wasn’t a fit court to try a case of dog stealin’ anyway; thet the law was all on his side, and thet he was goin’ to some higher court where law would be recognized and respected, and he could get jestic.

“ He went on in thet strain till he was most out of breath, and had to sit down. Then, I asked him if he was through. ‘ Yes,’ he said, usin’ some cityfied cuss word,

‘ yes, and I’m going straight back to town now, but I will be out here again in a short time to see you through.’ He called his driver then, got up, and started to go out.

“ ‘ Hold on a minute,’ I said, — ‘ jestice ain’t been ministered yet, and the case ain’t dismissed. I think it’s too late for you two to take thet long journey back to the city this evening, and I think you had better spend the night with us. Mr. Constable, you’ll take thet young man, and lock him up in my corn crib for contempt of a court of gineral jestice. And I hereby dismisses this case, and give jedgment in favor of the defendant accordin’ to the primary principles of ekerty and natchul jestice.’ ”

Justice Barley paused for the first time in this long, digressive monologue. He stretched out his feet, and stuck his hands in his trousers pockets, and looked at the two listeners with a shrewd twinkle in his eye, as though he expected from them some expression of approval. He was not disappointed.

“ Good for you, Judge,” John said: “ and you locked him up in the corn crib, did you? And what did he do? ”

“ Do! — what could he do? Jack caught him up in his arms like he was a little baby, and carried him out there, and chucked him in head foremost, and locked the door and left him. Goodness’ sake! — you never heard such a stream of ginteel, edgyated, cityfied cussin’ in your life; and he kicked and squirmed like a fishing worm, but Jack laughed at him. We stood the cussin’ for a little while to give him a chance to cool off. But he kept it up, and it got so vile, thet the Court went out there, and told him thet he would get an extry hour in there for every oath; and after a

little while he commenced to sober up and simmer down. My wife, with a woman's curiosity, would listen at him, and I didn't want her to hear all that dirty cussin' and carryin' on, and if he hadn't stopped when I told him thet, the Court was goin' to order the constable to gag him.

"We let him stay in there all night, and he kicked on the door, and tried to get out, but twan't no use. It's mighty seldom we ever hev any use for a jail here, but I built my corn-house strong so 'twould be ready in case of a 'mergency.

"In the mornin' the little feller was jûs' as perlite as a dancin' master: he looked real pitiful, and his eyes looked kinder draggly, like he had been doin' the wimmen's and baby act. I asked him how he was feelin', and how he had spent the night, and he said, 'miserable, miserable,' — that the big rats had been after him all night, and he hadn't had a wink of sleep.

"I asked him if he wasn't satisfied with the decree of the Court, and if he didn't think the decision was accordin' to the primary principles of ekerty. And he said 'yes,' thet he was more than satisfied, and those was great principles. Then he begged so hard, and talked so humble, thet I let him out, and my wife, who is very tender-hearted, and felt sorry for him, gave him a good breakfast; and he and his driver went on back where they came from, and we ain't never see or hear from 'em since, and I don't guess we ever will."

"He never took an appeal, or tried to take the case to a higher court, did he?" John asked.

"Not to my knowledge — ain't never heard of it. 'Spose the young feller satisfied hisself thet night in the corn-crib

thet Joe Baker had a good title, and that my court was the top notch of jestice in this community. Jack Timkins, and my corn-crib and big rats is valuable adjuncts in the enforcing of ginerall jestice.

“ Well,” Justice Barley continued, “ I done talk and talk, and told you what sort of man you is dealin’ with now, till I guess you air tired — ’specially after the shock you experienced this evening. And now what’s your business, and what can I do for you? ”

“ Well, Judge,” Mrs. Van Bergen said, “ we want to get married — Mr. John Ardslye and myself: we want you to marry us if you can.”

“ Umph,” grunted the justice, — “ want to get married! — eh? — umph — I might hev knowed it. I thought ’twas mighty strange — you two young people of opposite and entirely different sexes, and no blood kin, or legal affinity, come a-drivin’ for twenty-five miles by yourselves, and let the horses run away. Mighty curious tale, I thought all the time: I thought there was somethin’ up your sleeves where you hadn’t let out; but I didn’t say nothin’ as ’twas none of my business. Want me to marry you if I can? — of course I can; and tain’t a better marrier in the country than I is. I can put up the finest job of matrimony you ever see, and nobody ain’t never dissatisfied with my marryin’. I marry, and unmarry couples any time, and always give satisfaction.

“ Some folks think it’s better to be married by a preacher, but the ministers in these parts is so disrep’table and deserpated, thet decent people prefers to be married by a jestice. They’d ruther be married by the officer of the law

than by the officer of the gospel. The preachers, they adulterate the gospel with corruption, and the lawyers, they adulterate the law; but round here the preachers is worse-adulterators than the lawyers is, and they done got the gospel in such a fix it ain't fit to be married by.

“ 'Twas a preacher over here some time ago where married a couple while he was under the influence of strong drink, and he done it so funny, and made such a bunglin' job thet the couple didn't know whether they was married or not, and they was thereby placed in a very embarrassing situation. And they ain't certain about the correctness of the marryin' to this day, neither, although they's had a dozen or more children. The lady always said she didn't feel satisfied, and was goin' to get me to marry her over again in the right fashion. But she kept puttin' it off, and puttin' it off, till now I doubt if she is ever married right. People can't be too keerful in the way they is married; they ought to get it done right. If the horses ain't hitched together right there's goin' to be friction, and kickin', and trouble all along the road. Oxes don't pull together nice 'less the yoke is put on right.

“ I ginerally charge five dollars for marryin'; while thet may not be as cheap as some preachers and magistrates do it for, yet it's better to pay a little more, and know you got the thing done right. It don't pay to hev things done too cheap; what you save in money you lose in quality. No fifty cent marriage would do for me. I wouldn't feel like I was married good if I had been spliced by one of these jack-leg, cheap marryers. Then I couldn't afford to do it no cheaper; it's a great responsibility marryin' people,

and five dollars is as low as I could undertake it for. I 'spose you heard of my reputation as a good marryer, reason you come out here? "

"No," John answered, replying to the interrogative intonation of Barley's last sentence, "we had not intended to be married so soon; but after getting here and finding out what sort of a man you are, we think it too good an opportunity to miss, and we want you to settle the matter at once. But how about the license — can you give us the license, and will it be good and lawful everywhere we go? "

"Can I give you a license?" Barley repeated in a tone which smacked of irritated injury, — "of course I can give you one. This other young couple thet's goin' to be married here to-night is goin' to be married under my license. Yes, indeed, you needn't be uneasy about the validity of my license: by virtue of my office I performs all the dooties and details pertaining to marriage, divorce, and separation. And I'll tell you right now that if you ever want a divorce-ment, there ain't nobody can untie my knots as quick and easy as myself, if they can untie them at all."

X.

Having been married, John and his wife, next day returned to the city, and took up their residence at Maud's magnificent home. People wondered at the eccentric features of the sudden marriage, but John and his bride cared not a snap for that. For some weeks there was a whirl of gaiety — balls, receptions, operas, entertainments of all kinds. Maud was in the quotidian of her love; it raged

fiercely for a time — reached its white heat, and then began to grow cool. With the characteristic vacillation of her nature, the ardor for her new hobby of love soon commenced to wane. The giddy infatuation of a frivolous and sentimental nature began to burn out, and Maud Ardslye found herself a soberer, if not more sane woman. It was not long before she found herself conjecturing if a surfeit of love were not a possibility.

After that it was but a little while before she consciously admitted to herself that she had taken a too hasty step in marrying John Ardslye; that he had been but an impecunious nonentity whom she had espoused, and brought into prominence; — handsome, and clever, it is true, but then there were hundreds of other men of more social distinction who were that. She recognized the fact that she had loved to satiety.

From love surfeited to repulsion and hate is but a step, and in a short time Maud actually loathed her husband. Nor did she take pains to conceal her feelings from him. She was not the woman to do that. With all her violent vagaries of fancy she was usually outspoken. Accustomed to dogmatic ruling, she seldom had heed of, and had never acquired the habitual wiles of hypocrisy. All through life her impetuous will and her wealth, with cyclonic force and suddenness had swept obstacles out of her path. With unmistakable words and actions she soon apprised John of the fact that she had had enough of him.

“ You married me for my wealth, and the consequent social position and prominence which would redound to you,” she was telling him in one of those little boudoir

battle of words in which she and her husband now frequently engaged: "you never really loved me, and never will. The only arrows that ever entered your heart were ones tipped with gold, and winged with bank notes. I should have married a man of wealth and social position equal to my own, when I would have little cause to doubt the sincerity of his attachment. Men are unsentimental, practical, calculating creatures, anyway, and if there is the slightest odds against them I will never believe in the reality of their love. I was a goose for falling so desperately in love with you, that I could not see that cupidity, and not Cupid was the inspiration of your devotion. Here I am tied to a cold-blooded serpent of avarice, and a nobody at that. You sold your scheming attractiveness, and your good looks in the market of woman's affections, and you've gotten, you think, a good price. While here I am, poor woman! married to a man who does not love me, a man who through his evil machinations easily took advantage of my confiding and emotional sex, and duped me into marrying him: a man, who, cloaking his real motives under the innocent garb of love, took advantage of my tender woman's passions, and utilized them as a passport to my safe deposit vaults. Oh, what a fool I've been! I loathe a hypocrite: I detest a man who will debase the sacred passions, and make them his vehicle to commercial success."

John had reached that stage now where he ceased to reply save in very few words to these attacks. He took them stoically as he could, making neither defense nor counter-attack. When the tide first commenced to turn, and he had noticed her incipient coldness, and when she began to show

indifference, and then to make little insinuations and incisive remarks with all the unexpressed meaning a woman can throw into such things; — then he had tried to stop the ebbing — he had shown himself the warmest of lovers, and had tried to win her confidence and prove his love. Again, when at the next stage, she had come out and accused him openly of not loving her, he had denied it, making such adjustments of his conscience and the truth as he could.

But now as things grew from bad to worse, and as all his efforts to ameliorate conditions had proved fruitless, he strove to harden himself, to bear it philosophically if he could, stoically if he must, leaving results in the hands of fate. Hence he took his wife's vitriolic remarks in silence. He could love no woman who spoke to him thus, even had he ever done so. Not even a pretense of affection was possible. John had noble elements in him after all, and beyond a certain point his nature rebelled against dissimulation, even though it were expedient.

XI. .

Immediately after marrying Maud Van Bergen, John had congratulated and endeavored to persuade himself that he was, and had every cause to be, the happiest man alive. Success more brilliant than he had ever hoped for seemed to have come to him. What more was there for him to do but to enjoy life? Wealth, and fame, too, in a measure, he had. What was left to work for? Why should not his life henceforth be one delightful pastime?

John, with the buoyant heart of youth, had not recked of

all the factors going to make up human existence. He became very unhappy when Maud lost her infatuation for him, and began to do all she could to make his life miserable. In public, as long as he was her husband, she had to maintain him in the respect and dignity due that relation; but in private he was unprotected, and she then applied unmercifully to him every lash and sting her character and position gave her command of.

Thus it went on, and the years rolled heavily by, ever increasing John's unhappiness. He seldom saw his wife now; he and she had separate apartments, and there was very little communication of any kind between them.

John had resumed his business, as he found it necessary to make even his pin money; but it was in a half-hearted way, which brought him little success. His marriage with Mrs. Van Bergen, and his subsequent period of idleness and ease had ruined his prospects as a man of active work and business. People had come to look upon him as the good-for-nothing husband of Mrs. Ardslye.

Often when alone in these days of unhappiness, his thoughts would go back through the years, and he would think of Laura — of the days they had spent together — of their love. He wondered what had become of her — where she was — what sort of a life she lived. He wondered if she ever thought of him now; if she loved him still; if his child lived. And then a great lump would seem to rise in his throat, and, choked with bitter grief, unspeakable longing and anguish, he would put his head in his hands, and shed tears. Afterwards he would take from his pocket a card-case, and take therefrom, where he always carried

them, a letter, a faded pressed rose, and a little lock of fair hair. He would hold these, and look at them, and perhaps kiss them, for a while.

John and Mrs. Van Bergen had not been married for more than a year before the latter had become desperately enamoured of another young man — Harold Byrnewood. It was a re-enactment of the love affair with John plus the obstacle, in the latter case, of the sacred bonds of matrimony, or, more properly, the legal barriers prohibiting bigamous marriages.

One day while burning with the ardor of this latest love, Mrs. Ardslye had come unexpectedly into her husband's sitting room and found him reading letters which he hastily slipped into his desk upon seeing her. She, apparently, did not notice the act, and paid no attention to it then. But that afternoon when John went out for a drive, she went to his apartments, looked for, and found a key which would open his desk, and went through his papers. There she found a bundle of letters written to John long before by Laura. A thought flashed through her mind. "At last I have evidence!" she exclaimed to herself. She hastily reclosed the desk, and taking the letters with her, went out.

That night she and young Byrnewood spent hours in secret conference in her drawing room.

"I find, Harold, dear," she had told him, "that wealth can accomplish almost anything. Of course people will talk and criticise; but what do we care? A big bank account can laugh at public opinion. I am thankful to say that my independent fortune enables me to do just as I

please. Even were it coupled with depravity and folly, wealth will always command respect from the obsequious world. Married or not, I will keep company with you as much as I choose, and little I care what people say. Still, I would prefer the divorce if it is practicable. We will skilfully change their dates, and this evidence backed by my purse, will, I hope, prove sufficient, dear. You will see to it at once."

In a few days John had been notified that a suit for divorce had been filed against him by his wife. The bill alleged violation of the marriage vow as the ground for divorce. There were witnesses—some of Mrs. Ardslye's servants—who gave incriminating testimony; and the letters were offered as corroborative evidence of John's illegal relations with some incognito.

John fervently prayed in his heart that the divorce would be granted. But it was not. The evidence was not strong enough, and the court of its own knowledge well knew that a defense of recrimination could be set up, and that a divorce meant simply a little wider and more notorious opening of the door to licentiousness.

Thus the attempt to sever the nominal relation of husband and wife which existed between them, had failed, and John was left hopelessly tied to the cause of his woe.

As the years went by they brought him some recompense for his unhappiness in the way of a stronger character, and a growth and development of the good which was in him. He had time for reflection, and he weighed the elements of life in the balance of knowledge gained through bitter experience.

Conquered weakness is the best corner-stone on which a

noble character was ever founded. Characters thus founded are the ones of combative, inherent strength. They shape and mold themselves through their own might, and are stronger for every victory. Affliction is the best tutor for the haughty; and suffering is often the most skilled artisan in shaping a human life in its most perfect and beautiful finish. Year after year, John became a higher and stronger man.

XII.

One summer, some nine years after their marriage, Maud went on an extended foreign tour, and left her husband at home. John, weary and heart-sore with the emptiness of his life and magnificent misery, resolved to go hunting, and take an outing in the wild mountains of the West. He would take no one with him — he wanted to be alone — only a gun and a few other essentials for life in the wilderness. He longed for the calm solitude of the mountain fastnesses, the unrestrained freedom of an outdoor life. He wanted to be away from the hackneyed, and confining grooves of conventionality, and in the largeness of nature. His soul seemed parched by the life he had lived, and he thirsted for the fresh air of the forest. He wished to be alone amid the ennobling expanse of nature's solitudes, and to breathe in new life and hope from the pure ozone of the mountains.

Having decided on this step, he was not long in executing it. One bright morning a short time thereafter, he got off the train at a little station in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, and started trudging up a rough, ill-defined road. He had no definite plan of route or direction; and he wanted none. He only wanted to wander in the most un

frequented and sequestered mountain wilds, unhampered by plan or purpose — stopping now at a mountain cabin, now camping out, cooking his own victuals, and sleeping beneath the stars.

The road suited him, for it seemed to lead deeper and deeper into the wild hills, having no definite goal. On he went, gradually ascending till the little depot looked like a small, whitewashed box far below in the valley. It was a beautiful day; the air balmy and bracing, and heavily scented with the fragrance of wild thyme. Whichever way the eye turned, there were the great blue ranges piled up, and stretching away in infinite distance till they vanished in gold and purple haze. A hawk, sailing on rigid pinions, screamed its exultant pæan high over his head. A flock of crows, cawing raucously, flew from the big oaks overhanging the road, and sought shelter in the thick cedars higher on the mountain. John drew in great breaths of the fresh air, and felt his spirits rise as he gazed about on the scene of untamed grandeur and beauty.

There is a sublimity about the mountains and the sea — an awe, an impressiveness. The majesty of their vast magnitudes, their silent testimony of power, force and eternity, thrills the beholder with a solemn enthusiasm of worship and admiration.

Night came on, and the traveler turned his steps toward a column of smoke he saw rising from a little nook in the side of the mountains. He had tramped twenty miles since morning. His noon meal had been eaten at a wayside house far down the road; and he was now weary and hungry, and glad to find some human habitation, however

humble, in which he could find food and shelter, without the trouble of preparing these things for himself.

It was an old mountaineer's cabin which he had reached,—small, low-roofed, and moss-grown, but having a certain air of comfort and cleanliness. Nearly covering its front there were skins of wild animals tacked up to dry. Some long-handled gourds, and some strings of red pepper hung from wooden pegs driven in the side joists of the door. To one side there was a neat little kitchen-garden and some bee hives; on the other were some rude shanties which apparently had been constructed as quarters for the goats and poultry that were feeding near.

A small fice ran out and barked with vehement indignance as the stranger approached the dwelling. Then the door opened, and the lord of the premises appeared, followed by his wife, — an old crone clad in homespun, who stood in the door looking over his shoulder. They both looked surprised, and a trifle uneasy at the advent of a stranger. The man had long gray hair and beard. He wore a tattered shirt of blue jeans, corduroy trousers, tucked into high boots, and a ragged felt hat, which he placed on his head as he emerged from the door.

“Who you be, and what's yo' bus'ness, and where you come from?” he asked, having returned John's greeting.

In brief words John explained his mission in the mountains, and the reason of his unexpected coming to their home.

“Come in, come in,” the old fellow then said, “my name's Bill Burgess; — Betsy kin take keer of you, I reggin. I don't know how goat's milk and cornbread and pos-

sum pie will set on your city stumick, but you kin try it; and we got one spare room you kin take. 'Tain't nobody here but me and Betsy, now. We got a married daughter livin' East; and we had a son, but he got killed in the war. We hardly ever see anybody 'cept Johnnie, and his Ma, and the old couple they lives with. Johnnie, he comes over here 'most every day, and is heap of company for us. We's jus' as fond of him as if he were our own chile. Betsy, she makes him pies, and I makes him chink'pin whistles, and bird traps, and such things. He's a mighty fine boy, Johnny is."

"And who's Johnnie?" John inquired, wishing to know more of the subject of this eulogy.

"Johnnie!" the old man exclaimed, as though he thought it strange that any one should not know who Johnnie was, — "why, he's the chap that come here some years ago with his mother: he was a baby then, and his mother wanted to live with us. She was a widow lady — had jus' lost her husband and property and everything she had in the world; and she wanted a quiet home among decent folks, where she could live, and pay for herself and child by doing such work as a strong young 'oman kin do. We couldn't take her in, as our daughter was livin' with us then — that bein' before she was married — although we'd liked to have done it: — she was such a quiet, peaceable, ginteel-lookin' young 'oman, and with such a soft gentle voice and manners. Pretty, too, as a picture. I was in favor of riggin' up some sort of a shanty for her anyway, and lettin' her stay with us; but Betsy, she secin' how I was lookin' at her, and how pretty she was, got a little kinder jealous, I think, and thought twouldn't be altogether safe to have her 'bout the place, even if I is old. So she referred her to the old couple in

the valley right down there 'bout three quarters of a mile away. This old couple was livin' there by themselves — a good old pair as ever lived, and without a chick or child in the world. They got a mighty nice little cottage and garden, and two cows, and some sheeps, and fowls. Course all these things 'quires considerable 'tention, and as the old people wasn't as active as they used to be, and couldn't turn about as quick, Betsy told this young 'oman that she thought they would be glad to take her in.

“So we let her spend the night with us, although Betsy was mighty jealous, and watched me close as she could. And the next mornin' I took the 'oman down to Jake Huggin's, and introduced her to 'em, and told 'em the situation. He and his wife was very much tickled at the idea, 'specially when they see what a nice young 'oman she 'peared to be; and they told her that she was welcome to make her home there.

“And there she put up, and there's she been ever since; and a great blessing she's been to that old couple, too. She takes the management of everything there now, and they's got the neatest little place you'll find anywhere in these mountains. It's a pretty valley they live in — mighty small, but then it seems they got everything 'round 'em to make 'em content and peaceful.

“Johnnie — that Johnnie I was tellin' you 'bout — is that widow lady's son. He some nine or ten years old now, and as I was a-tellin' you, tain't a finer chap livin.' He jus' the life of our two families; for we's the only people that live in ten miles of here, and we don't know what we'd do without that boy. He's smart as a steel trap, too, — kin hunt, fish, trap, and do most anything. If you want any-

body to show you where the trout bites best, or where game is most likely to be found, you ought to call on him. He knows every deer path, and rabbit track, and fox den for miles round here."

They had taken seats before the fire in the dining, sitting, and living room of the small house, and the mountaineer paused to take up a firebrand to light his pipe.

"Yes," John said, "if I remain in this neighborhood for any length of time — as I expect to do — I shall be glad to have the services of Johnnie as guide and instructor in woodcraft; for I am virtually a novice in regard to mountain life and methods."

Meanwhile, the frugal supper had been laid by the old, but bustling Mrs. Burgess; and they took their seats at the table.

Having finished the meal, the two men drew their chairs to the fire again, and John, taking some cigars from his pocket, offered the old man one.

"Thankee, no," Mr. Burgess said, "I never smoke any of those new-fangled things. I can't go back on old friends for new. This old pipe and me has been chums for years; and I always has my own little terbacco patch, and never smokes any other."

They sat by the fire till a late hour, — the old mountaineer entertaining his companion with tales crudely, but graphically told. He told of his war-time experiences; of his mountain hunting trips; tales of local folklore, and neighborhood legends and traditions.

John found him a man of interesting personality — rough and unpolished, it is true, but original, and gifted with a talent for wild and picturesque narrative. So pleased was



“WITH SPINNING WHEEL BY HER SIDE.”

Ardslye with his host, that before they retired for the night, he decided to accept the invitation Mr. Burgess extended him, to make his house the headquarters of the mountain sojourn.

XIII.

Next morning, having finished breakfast, John with rod and gun and lunch, started off to take an all-day tramp, wishing to explore the surrounding country, and see what its possibilities were as a field for game and sport. He took a tiny path which wound down the mountain side for some hundred yards and then vanished in a thick growth of beech and chestnut. As he drew near the woods, a rabbit sprang up near the path, and with its white tail much in evidence, bounced and scampered towards the covert of the forest. John let drive with both barrels, and made a clean miss of it. He was reloading, when he heard the clatter of bare feet running rapidly around the turn in the path, and a childish voice rang out: "Did you get him, Uncle Tim?"

"No, I didn't get him," said John, smiling as a young boy rounded the bend, and after nearly running into him, came to an abrupt standstill on seeing a stranger. "And I'm not Uncle Tim," John continued, — "I'm Mr. Ardslye, and you, I suppose, are Johnnie. Poor shooting, wasn't it?"

The boy stood looking at him with mild-eyed surprise. He was a handsome, manly looking lad with big thoughtful blue eyes, fair, closely cropped hair, and a ruddy complexion. He wore a big straw hat, and was plainly, but neatly dressed in shirt and trousers of some stout summer-weight goods.

They stood staring at each other for some time, John

smiling good-naturedly, while the boy seemed to be scrutinizing his every feature. Presently he smiled too. "What was it?" he inquired, — "a rabbit?"

"Yes, a rabbit," John answered, "and I missed him clear as whistle: can't you go along with me, and show me how to shoot? I spent the night with Mr. Burgess, or Uncle Tim, as you call him, and he told me of you, and said I ought to get you to go outing with me to show me the best trout holes, and places for game. I'm lucky to have met you. Can't you go with me?"

"Yes, I reckon so, but I'll have to go back, and ask Mamma. She doesn't know you, and we see so few strangers here, that she tells me to be careful how I have anything to do with them when I do meet 'em. She says the world is just full of bad people, and we ought not to make friends with anybody too soon. You come on, go back with me — it's just a little ways — and let Mamma see you. You look like a nice, good man, and I think she will let me go with you.

"Don't anybody but Uncle Tim and I ever shoot around here, and, of course, when I heard your gun, I thought 'twas he."

"All right," John said, "I'll go back with you, and ask your mamma if you can go with me."

Guided by the boy John rapidly threaded the forest path, most of which was down hill, and soon emerged into a valley of only a few acres extent, but fair and fertile, and shut in by the great mountains. As they came along John heard an indistinct buzzing or roaring sound, though, because of its indistinctness, and the hurried pace of his companion, he did not ask its origin.

In the middle of the vale was a pretty little vine-covered cottage, neatly white-washed, and with a rustic veranda all overgrown with a profusion of flowering morning glories and trumpet creeper. An old man was hoeing the trim garden, to one side of the house. He was busy at his work, and did not notice the approach of the stranger.

As they came around to the front of the house they saw a woman sitting on a rustic seat under an apple tree. A spinning wheel, and a large basket piled high with wool, stood by her side. She was carding the wool, and as she finished a lot of it, she would twist it on the spindle, and then give the wheel a turn till it whirred resonantly. This was the noise they had heard.

Intent on her work, the woman did not see them till they were quite close. Then as the boy called out, "here's Mamma, now," not thinking but that her child was alone, with a fond mother's smile on her face, she raised her head to look at him, and hark to his childish want.

John had stopped by her, and, as she turned, looked full into her face. It was Laura Lane.

She knew him at once; and for a moment her face blanched almost as white as the wool which slipped from her hands onto the ground. Then the color came rushing back to her cheeks in a great surge, and tears welled up in her eyes. John's face was set, white, and immovable. Thus they stood looking at each other—motionless as though turned to stone; and neither spoke.

"O, Mamma, what is the matter?" Johnnie said, breaking the silence, seeing that something out of the usual had happened.

"Shall I tell him?" she said.

“ Yes, tell him,” John answered in a broken voice. Then he stooped and caught the lad up in his arms, and kissed him. “ My boy,” he said, “ I am your father.”

“ No you are not ; — my father is dead — he died long time ago — before I can remember. Didn’t he, Mamma ?

“ Yes, my boy, but he has been sent back to us by a merciful Providence. Our prayers have been answered, and he is come back to us ; and you must be glad and love him.”

“ I thought my father was dead ; I’m glad he isn’t.”

“ Yes, my son, I am he, and I love you.”

“ I believe you are my father : I can just *feel* you love me — just like Mamma does. And won’t you stay, and live with us now all the time, and not go ’way, and die any more ? I’ll show you how to shoot, and we can go hunting together every day, and have such a good time.”

The man said nothing ; but the boy felt himself drawn closer in his father’s arms. Then he was put down gently on his feet, and John, holding him by the hand, looked into the beaming, boyish face.

“ It’s a wonder I did not know those eyes,” he said ; “ they are yours, Laura. And I remember now when I first laid eyes on the lad something startled me, but I could not place it exactly — I didn’t know what it was.”

“ And you have looked for me,” Laura said, “ and traced me till you have found me in the wilderness. I thought, perhaps, you might come some day. My love has remained as firm and constant, as strong and enduring as it was on the day we parted. It is that which has brought you ; it is that which is irresistible ; — a power working silently, patiently, potently ; it accomplishes its

ends with resistless certainty; for it works in harmony with the eternal forces. Other things may triumph for a while; but in the end only that which works in unison with the great, good laws will prevail. You will not leave me any more; for I believe that your love, too, has remained true, and we will be married — married in law and custom as we have been in soul.”

“Yes, — my love — has — has remained — true; but, Laura, it was accident which brought me here — simply chance. I am married.”

The words were spoken in a hoarse, unnatural voice, sounding like hollow reverberations from the chambered darkness of a sepulchre; and they were followed by a death-like stillness. Laura bowed her head for an instant, and pressed her hand to her brow. John’s expression was that of one in agony, hard and fixed.

Laura now raised her head and looked full at him. Her face was white, her eyes cold, dry, expressionless.

“John,” she said in a firm voice, “if you are married it were better that you do not stay here. Leave us; leave me and my boy, and go, or we must flee from you. I did not know you had a wife, or I would not have spoken as I did.”

She got up, and taking her son by the hand, started towards the house.

John stared at them as one dazed. When they had nearly reached the door, he rushed forward, and catching the boy in his arms, kissed him passionately. He put him down, gave one look at Laura, and walked rapidly away.

It was with a leaden heart that he retraced his steps to the humble home of Burgess. He could not hunt; he took interest in nothing; he could scarcely think.

“What’s the matter with you?” Burgess said, as the guest sauntered dejectedly back, “come back mighty soon. Got tired already? — ain’t had no luck? — couldn’t find no game? — sick? or what is it? Tain’t snack time yet. Heard your gun — ain’t shoot yourself, is you? You look sorter white under the gills. Maybe it’s our grub ain’t settin’ easy on your stumick?”

“No,” John said, “nothing’s much the matter; but I couldn’t find any game except a rabbit, and I missed him. I’m feeling a little indisposed, Mr. Burgess, — I’m afraid this mountain air doesn’t agree with me. Then there’s an affair of business that is weighing on my mind, and which I have been thinking of, and which I ought to go back and attend to. So, all things being considered, I have decided that I must go back to-morrow. I have enjoyed and appreciated your hospitality, and hope you will accept this note as a token of my regard for you. I suppose Betsy will be willing to trust you to town to get it changed. I hate to go so soon, but it is absolutely necessary.”

“Pshaw! pshaw!” his host exclaimed in a tone of disappointment; “I’m mighty sorry — mighty sorry. You ought to have had Johnnie to go huntin’ with you, and you’d have done better, and wouldn’t be so down-hearted, and in such a hurry to get back. You ain’t even had a chance to see that boy yet; he’s the finest thing we’s ever raised in these mountains, and I wanted you to see ’im so as to get a good opinion of somethin’ here in the backwoods. I’ll go over there after him this evening, and bring him over here just to let you see him. Let him tell you about all the fish and game, and wild varmints that he knows of, and maybe you won’t be in such a hurry to go.”

“No, no; please don’t,” John answered, so solicitously, that Burgess looked at him curiously.

“Umph!” he ejaculated, — “sudden and funny dislike you’ve took to these mountains; and you was so pleased at fust. Can’t understand it. Reggin this fresh mountain air is stirred up the bile in you, and made you sorter moody. If you jus’ stay here a little longer ’twill all settle, and git out you, and you’ll feel better than you’s done for years. Betsy will make you a tonic out of roots and yarbs that’ll make you feel chirpy as a chicken.

“Or maybe you’s taken with a little spell of homesickness — want to see your wife and chillun; but you’d get over that blueness in a few days after you coteh onto our way of livin’, and we’d let you ’dopt Johnnie as long as you stay.”

Ardslie flinched so perceptibly every time Johnnie was mentioned, that it did not escape the shrewd observance of Burgess. He was in no better position to tell the cause, however, than he was to tell what was going on in the moon; but perceiving that his talk no longer interested, but rather worried John, he soon left him to pursue, uninterrupted, his own train of thought.

XIV.

Next morning, in accordance with his resolution, John started back home. As the train pulled out from the depot he gave a last look towards the mountains — towards the valley far up among them, where she lived — Laura. And he knew she was thinking of him. He felt as though he was being borne away to his grave; that he was about to leave all the joy, all the good that life had ever held for him, and was to be shut in oppressive darkness — hopeless forever.

On getting back to the city he found strange occurrences taking place at his home. A notice of sale was the first thing that greeted him as he entered his gate-way, and on going a little further, he saw that the house was filled with strangers, and the furniture was being removed. He also noticed that people looked, and pointed at him, some nodding and winking at each other, while others smiled, and shook their heads knowingly. He felt himself to be the object of vulgar curiosity, and perhaps ridicule, and not knowing, and not having the temerity to inquire the cause, he speedily retired to a place of privacy in the reading-room of a near-by club. While there, a paper having come into his hands, he saw his name and that of his wife in big heavy type, and ascertained the cause of the puzzling conditions. In a highly sensational article he read that his wife, while abroad, had obtained a divorce, and had been wed to young Byrnewood; that she had sold, and disposed of all her property interests in America; had bought a handsome villa in Southern Italy, where in the future she and her husband would reside.

John bowed his head in silent adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving when he had read this startling news.

"Thank God," he murmured, "I am now left a pauper as the world goes; but I have enough money in my pocket to take me back to her—to take me back to that wealth whose real value I now know. I have tasted the bitter fruit early in life, and I now know what things are of real worth, what things give true happiness, what things are of most good—most worth striving for."

That same day found him on the return trip to the mountains. And the afternoon of the next found him

entering the valley where Laura lived. He did not stop at Burgess's house; he noticed nothing — cared for nothing along the way; he only wanted to see her, and he went straight as though impelled by a resistless force.

John understood himself now: he knew his strength and his weakness; and he knew that Laura had always known him. His character was balanced now. Once he had been vacillating and indecisive, taking a false view of things; but he was steadied now.

As the sun sank behind the blue range, like a radiant king wrapping his robes of purple and gold about him, Ardslye came in sight of the cottage. There it was resting in the beauteous vale, while a halo of peace and happy contentment seemed to hover over it. The stillness of the summer afternoon was broken only by the bird and insect choristers. The bell-like notes of the wood thrush came from the grove of beech trees by the spring. That little fount of bubbling melody, the house wren, flitted about in the alder thicket near the path, singing with its accustomed cheeriness.

John turned aside into the beech grove to slake his thirst at the cool spring before he crossed the remaining fifty yards that separated him from the house.

Mankind loves to dally with the cup of joy, as the thirsty toper, restraining himself, loves to look in eager anticipation upon his glass ere he quaffs it. Perhaps the larger part of life's joy is in anticipation. Of the actual realization of felicity there is little, and it never lasts long. When can a man say, "now I am happy; now I have achieved all that I wish; now I will enjoy the realization of my ambition and desires?" It is always to-morrow, next month, next year. The future is filled with the phantom shapes of satisfaction;

which lure and beckon, but vanish or recede when we would come up with them. As a cat delays the killing of a mouse so as to play with it, and prolong the pleasurable excitement, so we hesitate to pluck and eat the fruit for which we have longed, striven and prayed — knowing that once eaten it is gone, and that then another arduous way to another goal will stretch before us; knowing that half of delight is in expectation and suspense. Possibly the acme of mental joy is reached not in the actual gratification of a wish, but in the consciousness of the immediate power to gratify the wish.

So John, having quenched his thirst, stood on the threshold of what he thought to be the crowning joy of his life, and hesitated to enter, while he looked into the clear, bubbling waters of the spring, and mused. He could feel the quickened beating of his heart, and he knew that he had a vague fear that fate might turn against him at the last moment.

After thus pondering for some time, with heart beating faster, he turned, and started towards the house. As he came from among the trees, and rounded the sharp bend in the path, he walked suddenly against a woman. The woman's face was concealed by a big sunbonnet, and she carried a water bucket which told her mission at the spring.

Recovering from his surprise at the collision, John hastily stepped back from the path to give her right of way. But, she, removing the bonnet from her head, looked him in the eye; and then he saw it was Laura.

“Why are you here — why have you come again?” she asked him.

In a few words, he told her everything; and then hand

in hand they went to the house. Matters were explained to the good old couple with whom Laura lived, and such simple arrangements as were necessary were made for a speedy wedding. Burgess was sent for, and consulted. He was much pleased at the turn of affairs; he said if they would just give him time, he thought he could get a fiddle and some dozen or so mountain girls and beaux to come and celebrate the wedding with seemly festivities.

A little after dark Johnnie came in with a string of squirrels he had shot. His mother's joy quickly infected him; and though he did not understand everything, he knew that his father had come to stay with them.

Within a week John and Laura were married, a minister having come for thirty miles over the mountains to perform the ceremony. Tim Burgess found it so difficult to collect guests in their sparsely populated regions, that it was decided to have a very quiet wedding. But the fiddle was forthcoming, and Tim rendered some very sweet and sentimental old melodies.

That night they gathered around the fire in their room, — John, his wife, and little son; and hearts were opened, and the stories of life told.

“I decided not to go to the city,” Laura said in answer to her husband's questions relative to her leaving home after the birth of her child: — “I did not want to go there where vice stalks abroad, and poverty, where it exists, is so abject. I wanted to raise my child amid the largeness and sublimity of Nature. In the woods, in the fields, there is no poverty, no vice. I wanted to raise him where his nature could expand in all of its true proportions, strong and riginal. For he was conceived in love, and I did not want

him bred in narrowness and conventionality. Here in this mountain valley he can grow, while a mother's love, and the holy influences of Nature mold his character. Here let the majesty and stability of the mountains be impressed upon his character; let the pure fresh air of these altitudes be imbibed in his very soul; let the sinewy lithesomeness and grace of the mountain ash be that of his frame; and let the tender and modest beauty of the wild mountain rose be that of his heart."

Some months after John and Laura had been wed, and while they were living in that rest and contentment of mind which often comes as the aftermath of tribulation; while they worked cheerily together as though each was the other's preordained complement;— he performing joyously the heavier labor which was necessary to meet their physical needs, while she did the lighter;— one day there came news that Maud Byrnewood had died; that during her last illness her mind had dwelt constantly on John, and remorsefully on her treatment of him; and that she had made her will and left him the greater part of her fortune.

The news caused no ripple in the calm, placid life of John and his little family.

"I will only keep enough to buy this valley for our home," he told Laura; "the rest shall go to educational and eleemosynary institutions. We know now wherein happiness consists, and that the voice of the nobler instincts is the only guide to it. Love is best — love and a high purpose. Life is worthless which has no ideal above itself. The old truths, the old principles, the yearnings of the heart; — they are right after all."

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